

## **Chapter 1 : Soul's Binding**

"Warriors are simply meat shields."

"Only idiots without the talents of magic would become Warriors, such low lives!"

"Warriors can only swing their swords stupidly. They are practically unevolved Barbarians. Magic, on the other hand, is the true art."

NO! That's not how it is! Lucifer desperately swung his sword, trying to prove Warrior wasn't just a lowly profession, or a profession only people without Magic talents would enter. Warriors can and should be a more important profession.

This was an era for Magic; it was so common that it could be seen everywhere. Though not everyone knew the kind of large-scale Magic that would bring destruction to the world, but almost everyone could cast the simplest of spells. Waterball and Fireball spells had become the basic necessity of life.

Those who did not know Magic were treated no differently than a disabled person.

Swords could never block the terrifying power of Magic. A simple fireball could melt a sword, and an ice bolt wasn't something a thin blade could block. All in all, swords were practically paper in front of Magic. Unless the sword-wielder ambushed the Magician like an Assassin, otherwise they could never harm the Magicians.

However, Lucifer often fantasized, how great would it be if there were a power everyone could achieve through training? Never would there be tragedies of people trying but not being able to cast a spell. Anyone, as long as they were willing to put in the efforts, could see the fruits of their labor.

Once again, Lucifer was beaten to the ground by a child with a simple waterball spell. He lay on the ground, unable to cast even the simplest of protective shields, and he had to desperately use his hands to cover his vital areas.

"I have to, I *must* find my own power!"

Lucifer thought of every way possible to increase strength: swinging his sword until he passed out, carrying heavy things to climb the steepest of hills, etc. After training with his swords, slowly but surely, his body became more and more fit, until the neighboring children could no longer bully him. But he wasn't satisfied with it; he knew if he spent the amount of efforts he had into Magic, he would probably have been at least an intermediate Magician by now, but truth was, he might not be able to win against a novice Magician at this point.

The reason was, even the strongest body couldn't resist a hit from a low level Magic. He had to use his speed to dodge Magic spells raining out of the sky, then catch an opportunity to defeat the Magician.

Everyone told him he had already gotten very strong, and he was the best among the Warriors, so there was no need to compare himself to Magicians.

"Could this be the limit for Warriors? Is that all I can do? No! There must be some power, with enough training, that could resist Magics. It must exist within our bodies, unlike having to use outside force like Magic."

Perhaps a blessing from the Gods, or perhaps it was the result of Lucifer's relentlessness, he did indeed finally find a power, that existed within his body, and it became more and more powerful with practice. Lucifer decided to name the power "Aura".

At first, the Magicians looked down upon Lucifer's Aura. So what if this Aura thing could block low level magic? There were still intermediate, advanced, and even higher levels of Magic; they thought the child's play thing called Aura couldn't possibly block Magic.

As such, people still paid little attention to Lucifer's Aura, but he didn't care; he was only happy about finding a way to gain power proportional to the efforts put in. He didn't keep this method to himself either: he taught Aura to anyone who wanted to learn.

However, one time, Lucifer found out, to his surprise, a person who learnt Aura from him was using it to bully others. In an instant, the thought of him being bullied by Magic when he was a child flashed across his mind. He bitterly taught that person a lesson, and he also realized, this kind of power can't fall into the wrong hands.

"If people who learn Magic are called Magicians, then there should be a name for people who study Aura. However, this name can't be a simple name; it should be something more noble, and it should represent honor, discipline, and righteousness, it... no, I should say we, we will be called, Knights!"

More and more people wanted to join Lucifer's ranks of Knights, but he didn't get greedy; he picked the people who had good character and were willing to follow the Knight's conducts, then taught them the way to train their Auras. He hoped they would bring honor to the name of Knights, and make more people respect Knights.

Though it was still the era of Magic, but Lucifer deeply believed, this would all one day change, and Knights would be active on this stage of life.

Magicians became more and more scared; the possibility of Aura seemed endless, and the founder, Lucifer, had become unfathomably powerful. He was already at the point of going toe-to-toe with advanced Magicians. This kind of power was strong enough to threaten Magic.

“We can’t let this power continue to exist; if this power continue to expand, it will affect the survival of Magic. We must extinguish it, get rid of Aura, and kill everyone with Aura!”

Lucifer and the people who learnt Aura from him found themselves condemned by the entire world. They were arrested, posted as wanted people, assassinated, framed, and all kinds of ridiculous crimes were pinned against them; there was even a saying that Aura was an evil type of Magic.

*‘We follow good conduct, why?’*

*‘We use Aura to maintain justice, why?’*

*‘We didn’t do anything wrong, why?’*

As each of his comrade Knight die, they would always hold Lucifer’s hand before their death: *‘Don’t give up; this world will eventually recognize Knights’ rightful existence.’*

Finally, only Lucifer remained, and he had been tossed into a corner in the world. He had lost all hopes he had in the world. He knew there was no where he could go; other than being extinguished, the only other choice he had was to fight back!

He traveled to the ends of the world and found a legendary species — Dragons.

He came to an agreement with the Sacred White Dragon, the king of the Dragons; the Dragons would do everything in their powers to assist Lucifer in establishing his own nation. Likewise, the land acquired by the Knights would also be owned by Dragons. Dragons and Knights became the best companions, and thus began their long journey for conquest.

Lucifer’s code of Knights attracted more and more people dissatisfied with the arrogance of Magicians. Lucifer’s power grew from having to hide around to gloriously dance on the world’s stage, and began to take over the lands.

Lucifer’s empire had finally established. To thank the Dragons, he changed his last name to Zhuogen, and called himself the Dragon Emperor, with his empire being called the Dragon Empire!

*[T/N: Zhuogen is Chinese phonetic translation of Dragon]*

The world was going to have a regime change; no longer would it be the Magician's world, and instead it would become an era for Knights...

However, the dream was broken, by the terrifying that could've shattered the world... Lucifer again experienced the nightmare of his companions dying one by one. The world began to change, and the atmospheric change was horrific. Sometimes when he lied down at night, he would find himself atop a mountain in the morning instead of a plains, and he couldn't even find the corpse of his companions.

*'You despicable Magicians...'* Lucifer lost his loyal friends who swore their souls to him one by one. His hatred was as powerful as the Magic that shattered the world.

"Dragon Emperor, on our behalves, and in the name of Knights, please conquer this world."

Countless shouts and endless anticipations. Pairs and pairs of hands fell out of his grasp and stopped moving after saying so to him...

"I promise! No matter what it takes, I will let Knights take over the entire world!"

\* \* \*

Dragon Emperor suddenly opened his eyes. He climbed up from his bed. In that instant, he couldn't actually figure out who he was; was he Lucifer, Caffey, or someone else?

And then, his pounding heart reminded him: he was none of before; he was only the Dragon Emperor's heart, determined to take over the world. What exactly happened? Why would he be sleeping here, and dreamt about Lucifer... his heart quickly pounded a few times.

The Dragon Emperor frowned, and gently touched his chest and said, "Is that you, Caffey? You let me remember Lucifer's past? Do you really think this would change my mind? Unfortunately, you're wrong; you've only reaffirmed my decision to take over the world!"

He stood up, finally remembering why he was here: he noticed the Black Dragon King's hypnosis had gotten weak, so he came to investigate. He didn't expect Miluo to pretend the hypnosis was still active; when he was investigating, Miluo suddenly attacked him.

However, he wasn't going to be taken down so easily. Though he was taken by surprise, but he still counterattacked, and he was sure Miluo's wounds would be worse than his.

The Dragon Emperor looked around; surely enough, Miluo was still passed out on the ground in his human form.

He slowly walked in front of Miluo, and put his hand on his forehead, planning to reinforce the hypnosis. When the light of hypnosis slowly shone, Miluo opened his eyes, and he looked like he was his own self, but the Dragon Emperor wasn't worried: he had already immobilized Miluo.

Sure enough, Miluo didn't move at all; he even asked lazily, "Dragon Emperor... or should I say, the heart of the Dragon Emperor, how many years have you lived?"

"Time isn't important." The Dragon Emperor answered lightly.

"Nonsense. Time is very important. Time will take many important things away." Miluo grunted coldly, and then said in a lamented tone, "For example, the sharp pain of losing Bairui back then, has been mostly taken away by time. For another example, my friendship with Caffey back then has now been washed away by time."

The Dragon Emperor still didn't react. These words held no meanings to him.

"Plus, you've lived for that long." Miluo said as if he was pitying, "Your everything has been taken away by time; you don't even have much humanity left in you."

The Dragon Emperor froze, and the light in his hand suddenly became very bright, while Miluo's eyes had now suddenly dulled. Though he was still alive, but his eyes looked no different than those of a dead man.

"You think time took away my humanity? Wrong!" The Dragon Emperor roared. "It was me who abandoned my own humanity!"

The Dragon Emperor lowered his head, and murmured, "If you knew how the heart of the Dragon Emperor survives, you must not think I still have any humanity left!"

He suddenly raised his head, and roared wildly into the sky with every ounce of strength he had, "It was a thousand lives! A thousand people who were willing to drain themselves of blood to activate the forbidden Magic; a thousand people who were willing to take out their hearts as sacrifice; a thousand loyal Knights who swore their souls to me!"

"Your Highness?"

The Dragon Emperor suddenly stopped. After a while, he asked calmly as if nothing had happened, "What's the matter, Idojin?"

"The successor escaped the control of hypnosis, and escaped."

The Dragon Emperor's body shook, anger flowing out of his eyes again.

"Prince Mocha is dead. Prince Cappuccino, Princess Lanski, and the two legendary Knights are all missing. According to Yizhou's report, the Prince and Princess, along with the two Knights, lured the successor out, then attacked him. In the chaos, the successor killed Prince Mocha, then ran away. Others then left, now nowhere to be found..."

A purple Aura suddenly exploded from the Dragon Emperor's body, destroying everything in the immediate vicinity. As the dust settled, a roar could be heard:

"I want to conquer the world. I can't let them down... I must not fail!"

## **Chapter 2 : Barbecue Worker Liola**

Liola stared blankly as he held hands with a child, while the child's mother was incredibly busy trying to make a comfortable place for Silver Mask and his Dragon to rest and sleep.

On the side, Baolilong stood in its human form, and wrapped its body with a rag Liola gave him for a little bit of cover. It was already reaching Liola's chest in height, but its personality was still like a child. Seeing papa holding hands with another child, it was a bit unhappy, and it was shown on its face with its lips pouted. Baolilong also tried to keep running into papa's arms, as though it was saying "Hmph! Papa loves me more."

"Done." The mother finally finished, and let out a deep sigh while wiping away the sweat on her forehead. She then said with a smile, "Sir Silver Mask, what do you think of this place? Though it might not be very luxurious, but I can promise you this place is very comfortable."

Liola nodded carelessly. He didn't actually really cared much about where he slept; after all, Baolilong and he slept in the wildness, so whether they had a bedroom or a bed, it was of no concern.

Nevertheless, he still courteously looked around. The room was quite large, and the decoration was simple. There were two beds, and by the looks of it, they were for him and his human-form Baolilong. There was also a large basket to the side, with thick and soft clothes in side. It seemed the mother was worried Baolilong may turn back into Dragon while sleeping, so she caringly added this place for a small Dragon to sleep.

To Liola, this room was made up by someone far more picky than him. He nodded and said, "Great."

"Then I'm glad." The mother clearly seemed happy with her large smile.

Seeing others smiling because of him, Liola also unconsciously began to smile slightly.

"Sir Knight, you should smile more." The mother said sincerely, "Smile can make a person seem amiable, and others would like you more, especially when your smile feels like a spring breeze!"

"Is that so?" Liola was a bit confused; didn't Kaiser tell him to not smile? He said his smile was a smile of death... right?

Seeing the Knight confused, the mother smiled, and reached out her hand to tidy up Liola's messed up collar while saying, "Sir Knight, please forgive me for being direct, but you really don't look old, more like a big child, so I feel some pity for you."

Liola didn't know how react, so he froze as the mother straightened his collars.

"I always feel like you're a young man who had just stepped out of your home. Though you're happy you can be on your own, but you don't seem to know where you should go." The mother smiled lightly, "Don't laugh at me, sir Knight, this was just my experience when I was still a young girl. While the small things I did were incomparable to the great things you do, but I do indeed feel, you really seem like me back then."

Liola remained silent for a while, then asked, "Then what do you think I should do?"

Mother burst out a laughter, and gestured at Liola and said, "It's not about what I think, but it's about what you think. You should think about where you should take your next step."

"Papa, Baolilong is hungry!"

Baolilong yelled only half truthfully. On one hand, it really was about “half” hungry; after all, it had been eating for far too much lately, and even Baolilong seemed to have a bit of indigestion, to the point where it changed from constantly being angry to eating only three meals a day. Of course, the sum of the three meals was about the size of a half Lesser-Dragon, and this made even Liola worry about Baolilong’s now chubby belly.

Of course, on the other hand, it had to do with its jealousy. Just by judging Baolilong’s pouted little mouth and its stare at the little boy’s hand, one could tell Baolilong was unhappy its papa was holding hands with another child.

The mother could immediately tell that Baolilong was jealous, and she couldn’t hold back a laugh. Liola, on the other hand, had little experience as a parent; he thought Baolilong was really hungry. Seeing the sky darkening, he decided it was time he should go find some food.

“I’ll go find some food.” Liola said to the mother.

“And Baolilong!” Baolilong protested loudly.

Liola glanced at Baolilong, and continued, “Baolilong and I will go find some food.”

Baolilong then nodded wildly with satisfaction.

The mother hesitated, then asked carefully, “Sir Knight, could you please bring a bit of food for the other people here. Everyone has been hungry for a long time, therefore...”

Liola nodded. He had already planned on dividing the meat to the people. No matter how much of a glutton Baolilong was, it couldn’t eat more than half a sub-Dragon in a day. As for Liola, he would be full with about a fist-sized meat. Instead of letting the other half of the meat rot, it was much better to divide it to the other people.

However, this was just Liola’s estimate. Liola knew, even if Baolilong ate all the meat, he could go hunt another Lesser-Dragon for the people.

He liked doing this, and also liked the way the people smiled after doing so; it made him very happy.

“Let’s go, Baolilong.”

Liola stepped away without looking back, and Bour was on his way in from outside. Bour greeted him warmly, and Liola nodded in return, then walked out the door.



"Bour, did you ask around for sir Knight? Did you find the person he's looking for?" The mother asked with concern.

Bour was smiling before, but as soon as he heard this question, his expression turned to awkwardness. He scratched his head, and didn't know how to answer.

The mother noticed something wrong, and immediately asked solemnly, "Bour, what is the meaning of this? Don't tell me you didn't go ask around for the Knight?"

Being accused now, Bour immediately explained, "Aiya, I did really did inquire around for Silver Mask, but how could I made much of a difference in the matter? Those people are wanted criminals! Even the Dragon Empire and Commerce Alliance couldn't catch them, how is a small businessman like me going to do anything!"

Hearing this, the mother seemed a bit relaxed, and she said with a sense of blame, "Then you shouldn't have promised him before. Now you can't even get any information, what are we going to tell Silver Mask?"

"Uh..." Bour seemed to have difficulty answer; he said stutteringly, "In any case, just make him stay first..."

"What do you mean by that?" The mother asked back, noticing things might not be as simple as she thought.

"You know... if Silver Mask left, then the people in the city like us would get hungry again, so of course we have to make him stay first." Bour's voice got quieter and quieter as he spoke, as if even he himself thought it was shameful.

"W-wh... how could we do that?" The mother began to panic. She now realized the people on her side were actually tricking the young Knight.

Bour showed a depressed look, "We don't have any other choice. Everyone is so hungry, and we have to even lie to our own savior to survive. You don't want your child to end up dying in the streets from hunger, do you?"

The mother heard, and her face changed drastically. She looked at her child on her side in dismay. She didn't know what to do; if there were other ways, she would never be willing to lie to that Knight, but if an ordinary person saw a Lesser-Dragon, they would've ran as fast as could, nevermind killing it and cooking its meat as food.

"Just... a little bit more. I'll ask everyone to eat a bit less, and we could cure the meat and eat them slowly." Bour said pleadingly, "Then, even if Silver Mask leaves, we will not go hungry."

“Is that so...” The mother fell down into a chair depressingly. She had no choice but agree with what Bour had done, but that didn’t reduce her sense of guilt towards the Knight.

“Lesser-Dragons! Lesser-Dragons are attacking!”

A rumble came from the outside. The mother was shocked, and Bour waved his hand, “You stay here, I’ll go out and take a look.”

The mother nodded panickedly. She grabbed her child, and held him tightly in her arms, then looked as Bour ran out the doors. Bour didn’t need to ask anything; the crowd scrambling for cover, the flying Dragons in the air, and the banging noises from the walls all told him the Lesser-Dragons had indeed arrived.

“What the hell? What are the Knights doing in the capital in the north? How could they have let so many Lesser-Dragons come to the south?” Bour’s jaws dropped. Ever since he had ran away from the north and taken refuge in the south, he had never seen such a large group of Lesser-Dragons.

Last time, there were still the Aklan government holding the Dragons back, so the civilians could retreat, but this time, they had nothing! Only thing remaining was a wall that was about to crumble at any time. If the Lesser-Dragons really charged in through the walls... it would be a devastating disaster for them.

“Don’t run! You guys can’t outrun the Dragons!” Bour yelled loudly, “Quick! Go back to your basements, and use everything you can to block the basement doors!”

Though one man’s yell was far from enough in such a noisy environment, but at least some people did hear and hurried back into their basements.

Suddenly, after a bang, the walls finally fell. Everyone’s eyes widened in horror as they saw hundreds of Lesser-Dragons outside of the walls howling into the sky. Though the fearsome Black Dragon was not among them, but to the civilians, the Lesser-Dragons were no different than the Black Dragon — they were all equally deadly to them.

“Silver Mask...” Bour was now like a deer in headlights as he uttered these words. He knew this was the only one remote possibility that could save them. Nevertheless, one Silver Mask perhaps still couldn’t defeat hundreds of Dragons... maybe it would be better if he didn’t come back? At least there would be one less casualty.

*‘Savior... perhaps the only way people like us could repay you, is to pray that you don’t come back in time,’ Bour really did pray over and over, ‘Please, don’t come back in time, please...’*

Unfortunately, unlike other people, Liola was the terrifying Assassin who could notice his enemies from kilometers away. A formation consisting of hundreds of Lesser-Dragons couldn't possibly not catch Liola's attention.

In the sky, among gray Lesser-Dragons, a Dragon with glittering white scales appeared. Its snow-white wings glided through the sky, and appeared instantly in the city. After withdrawing its wings, Baolilong elegantly stood atop of the highest building in the city. Everyone stopped whatever they were doing, including the people being chased by Lesser-Dragons, in spite of the dangers behind them.

A Lesser-Dragon opened its mouth, planning to swallow the dazed people in front of it... When suddenly, a bolt of lightning flashed, and the Lesser-Dragon turned into a charred object, and slowly tipped over. Unfortunately, the place where it was falling had a few dazed civilian standing there.

"Hurry and move! You idiots!"

Bour yelled in panic, but those people stared at him with the same daze, instead. When they realized they were covered in a shadow, it was already too late...

Bang!

A few civilians who lowered their heads and thought they were dead for sure, but after a loud noise, they realized the anticipated pain did not come. They slowly raised their heads, and the first thing entered their eyes was the sight of a layer of red, and the charred corpse of the Lesser-Dragon was stopped by this layer of blood red. Though ordinarily this blood-red color would have instilled fear, now it actually brought them a sense of warmth.

Other than the blood red light, there was a black figure standing in front of the civilians. With the Silver Dragon embroidered Black Knight uniform, the thin black figure was able to stop the giant Dragon, and saved the civilian's lives.

"Silver Mask!" Someone yelled loudly.

Liola turned his head slightly, and nodded, then said, "Go to where Bour is, I will protect you."

The few of them nodded. Their eyes were wet, and after wiping them, they ran towards where Bour was, while yelling, "Come here quickly! Silver Mask told us to get to where Bour is, he will protect all of us. Don't be afraid! Come here quick!"

After the yelling from the crowd, everyone ran towards Bour, which made him quite nervous... he quickly ran towards the plaza in front of the clocktower. He thought it

was the best choice because the White Dragon was defending there, and it was the only place that could hold so many people.

Liola saw people heading to the plaza, so he communicated with Baolilong via telepathy, "Baolilong, you stay there, don't let the Dragons harm anyone. Also, you handle the flying Dragons, but be careful that the ones you strike don't land on people."

"Okay!" Baolilong responded, but then couldn't refrain from asking, "Papa, can Baolilong roast a Dragon to eat?"

Liola frowned. He had originally wanted to tell Baolilong to fight seriously, but then he thought, they were originally going to hunt a Lesser-Dragon for food; now that the city was overrun with Lesser-Dragons, it would be a shame not to roast them. After thinking, he answered towards Baolilong, "You can roast them all, but protecting everyone is your priority."

"Okay! Baolilong understood!" After answer, it casually threw a lightning ball and roasted a Lesser-Dragon. In compliance with what papa said, Baolilong purposely increased the momentum of the lightning ball; while it roasted the meat, it also send the meat flying into the distance, so it could await for Baolilong later.

Baolilong was now like a Dragon-shaped tesla coil, constantly spitting out intense bolts of lightning. Its accuracy was also beyond believe. Baolilong seemed to be having fun, and its head was filled with nothing but thoughts of being able to eat. If it were Liola's words, Baolilong would have probably forgotten to protect the civilians.

*'Ah! This one is too charred. It's fine! Next... hmm? It's still moving, not cooked enough. Another one, just right, sooo much meat to eat~~'*

Liola quickly took out Broken Silver, and charged towards the place where the wall was breached, planning to cut them off there. If too many Dragons charge in, even Baolilong wouldn't have time to stop them. Liola himself wouldn't be able to take care of everyone in a chaotic situation like that either, so he decided to stand where the walls fell, and operated as an attacking wall.

Liola's thoughts were quite simple. He stood at the breach, facing hundreds of Lesser-Dragons.

"MY GOD! I hope he's not planning on just standing there?!"

The civilians exclaimed. Panic appeared on many people's faces, some couldn't even look, as if they feared their savior would sacrifice himself for them like this.

What they didn't know was, this man was one who had single-handedly killed thousands of Lesser-Dragons to vent his anger. If he didn't have to worry about the safety of the civilians behind him, Liola could have chosen to kill a few to eat as a meal, then leisurely escape. Or he could turn this place into the largest Lesser-Dragon cemetery; none of this was a problem to him.

A silver light quickly flashed around. Though Liola was fast, electric even, but facing hundreds of Lesser-Dragons alone, it was a bit difficult to not let any through. He moved around quickly, and the silver light in his hand also swung around faster and faster. It was only possible to see lines of silver light rather than the weapon itself.

The crowd was in shock. This kind of speed... no matter how much they rubbed their eyes or stare, they couldn't see it clearly. The only thing they saw were silver lines acting like a net, spanning over the entire area where the wall fell. As soon as a Lesser-Dragon touched the silver net, its skin and flesh would've busted open as if it just charged into the sharp edge of a giant sword.

The crowd couldn't refrain from the feeling of terror. Even if the person in front of them were protecting them, this was far too... scary, sanguinary, or some other adjective the people couldn't think of. Nevertheless, they were having trouble holding their breaths at the sight of all this.

"It's so pretty!" The boy the mother was holding naively yelled while pointing at Liola, "Older brother looks like a Silver Dragon! Amazing, go brother go!"

Hearing the little boy's shouts, the civilians finally remembered this person was protecting them. Bour, especially, felt ashamed at the thought of being scared of Silver Mask; he finally remember, Silver Mask was protecting them. How could he possibly be afraid of him? It shouldn't ever happen!

To make up for his shameful thoughts, Bour immediately yelled loudly, "Go Silver Mask! Go Silver Mask..."

Since there was someone who took the lead, the crowd had no reason not to follow. In an instant, everyone began shouting on top of their lungs, and everyone were cheering for Silver Mask like a madman.

Liola did indeed hear. Although he wasn't one to like noise, the clamor behind him gave him an indescribable warm feeling in his heart. Even he didn't realize it himself, as if he didn't want to disappoint the crowd, his speed was actually getting faster and faster.

In the few minutes that followed, Liola lost track of how many Lesser-Dragons he had killed. Though they're not sentient, Lesser-Dragons still had the animalistic

instinct of recognizing a strong threat. When they finally realized the tiny being in front of them was a beast who could kill them easily, the speed and amount of Lesser-Dragons charging up had slowly decreased.

Liola felt a pressure relieving, and he thought the Lesser-Dragons were probably letting up, then it would be great. Though Lesser-Dragons weren't sentient beings, but he still didn't like the feeling of driving a knife into a blood, nor the feeling of being covered in their blood, because this made him remember the people he had hurt before: Qiusi and Mocha.

"Eldest brother, you don't like it when I kill... but, I am killing to protect everyone, and I'm very happy. So, you won't get mad, right?" Liola thought quietly in his mind. He knew in his heart, Mocha wouldn't be mad, and would instead smile and pat his shoulder.

Now, the pressure on Liola had decreased to the point where he had time to turn around to see the situation with Baolilong. Because the flying creatures had long been wiped out of the sky, and the Lesser-Dragons that charged in while the walls were unguarded had now been turned into meat hills, the city was now secured. Baolilong also ran off and dragged a Dragon and starting biting the meat off. Perhaps it was afraid its large body would accidentally hurt the people, it decided to turn into human form, and began to eating happily.

As it was eating, a small figure suddenly appeared next to it. Baolilong narrowed its eyes, and turned around to see — it was the boy who dared to hold hands with Liola before. Baolilong gave out a low growl from the throat, trying to drive this boy away.

"Older brother, I want to eat meat too!" The boy didn't seem scared at all, and smiled as he asked for some meat from Baolilong.

Hearing this response, Baolilong paused, and yelled with a pouted mouth, "I'm not your older brother, Baolilong doesn't have a younger brother!"

"Baolilong?" The boy seemed confused.

"My name is Baolilong, my papa gave me that name!" Baolilong said proudly, then used its hands to point at Liola, who was still fighting valiantly, and then loudly announced, "That's my papa!"

The little boy was even more confused, "You're older brother's little child? But, everyone says you're brother's Dragon."

"Baolilong is papa's Dragon." Baolilong said naturally, as if there was nothing strange about it.

The little boy answered with an “oh”, perhaps he had now been thoroughly confused, but he didn’t really care. He gulped, then asked, “Older brother, can I have a piece of meat? I’m so hungry.”

Baolilong was a bit hesitant. It pouted and looked at the meat in its hand, then looked at the person calling it older brother. Baolilong wanted to ask papa, but papa looked like he was busy and didn’t have time to answer, so it had to decide whether it should give some meat to the boy.

Seeing the anticipation in the boy’s eyes, Baolilong decided to tear off a piece of meat, then threw it at the boy, “Here!” Then it turned around and continued to eat its food.

“And my mama, can you give me a piece for my mama?” The boy held the meat, and asked somewhat timidly.

Being interrupted again and again while eating, Baolilong seemed a bit angry. It turned around and yelled, “You’re really annoying!”

The boy was surprised, and tears circled in his eyes. His little shoulder also fell down. He held the only piece of meat he had, and slowly walked towards his mother.

“Wait, Baolilong has a question.” Baolilong pouted, “Why don’t you have a papa? Are you trying to take Baolilong’s papa?”

The boy heard, turned around, and yelled, “I’m not trying to take your papa! I have a papa, but mama said he went to somewhere far, far away.”

“Is that so? Then would he run into my mama?” Baolilong said naively, “My mama also went to somewhere far, far away.”

“Really!?” The boy yelled with surprise, “Perhaps my papa really would run into your mama.”

“I don’t know either if they’ve met...” Baolilong tore off another piece of meat, and handed it to the boy, “Here! As long as you don’t try to take my papa.”

The boy grabbed the meat, and happily smiled, “Thanks!”

Baolilong nodded, and began to eat again.

Truth was, Liola saw everything that happened. He wasn’t actually very busy, but he wanted to see if Baolilong would give the boy meat. Seeing Baolilong did indeed

do so in the end, Liola smiled. Although even he, himself, had no idea why he would be this happy simply because his Dragon would give food to the boy.

By now, there were only a couple of Dragons around the breach. Liola thought, perhaps this crisis was about to be over...

However, at this time, the sound of walls being hit came from other places. Liola immediately understood, the Dragons planned on creating another breach because this one was being blocked by him.

"Baolilong! Go handle those Lesser-Dragons hitting the city walls, don't let them break the walls!" Liola yelled immediately.

Baolilong threw down the meat, transformed into a large Dragon, and flew towards the place where the clashing sounds were coming from.

And then, there was another sound of clashing, one, two... until finally there were countless number of places in the wall that were being destroyed.

Baolilong didn't know which direction it should fly, and it asked panickedly, "Papa, what do I do?"

Even Liola didn't know what to do. No matter how strong he was, he was simply one person, and he couldn't protect so many civilians here. However, looking at the trusting eyes from the civilians and Baolilong, Liola knew he could never say something like "I have no plans" at a time like now.

He quickly left the breach, and ran towards the plaza, while communicating with Baolilong with telepathy, "You fly into the air and use lightning to strike the Dragons. I will use Aura to stop them from harming the civilians."

"Okay."

Baolilong immediately flew into the sky, and used his lightning attacks to attack the Dragons outside the city walls.

Liola returned to the plaza. He looked at the few thousand of people in the plaza, and he was worried whether his Aura could shield such a large area. Though he had now gained a deeper understanding of his Aura, but he had been using it more for offense and seldom for defense; now that he had to use it to create a giant shield to protect thousands of people, Liola felt uncertain.

"Please come closer."



Liola said solemnly to the crowd. He didn't forget to add Ki to his voice so everyone could clearly hear his words.

Bour immediately began to yell, "Hurry! You lazy asses, come closer! Forget about helping, just don't burden him any more than you have to!"

Liola blinked a few times, and thought Bour's actions were quite interesting: he would occasionally kick the men in the butt when they moved slowly, and the people getting kicked didn't seem angry, instead they moved faster than before. Eventually, the crowd squeezed together like a can of sardines, and formed a tight circle. The area was almost two thirds less than what it was before.

Liola closed his eyes, and breathed deeply. Now it was his turn to hold up a shield. There were no longer any flying Dragons in the sky that could threaten Baolilong, so Baolilong could simply roast the Dragons on the ground with electricity.

When he closed his eyes, there were already walls beginning to crumble. The whole thing seemed to be happening in slow motion. There were four or five places in the wall falling within seconds of one another. The giant Lesser-Dragons charged in like water through a broken dam, and as soon as they saw the people congregating on the plaza, they all converged towards that location. The civilians saw they were surrounded and were obviously terrified, so they all fixed their gazes towards Silver Mask.

Liola still held his eyes close, and his hands were casually behind him. His attitude seemed carefree, and this made everyone relax a bit, thinking the situation wasn't as dire as they thought. If it were very serious, Silver Mask shouldn't be as relaxed as he was now.

The civilians unconsciously became more calm. The Lesser-Dragons had already reached them, but even the people on the outer ring didn't seem to panic at all, only because the man stood carefree in the center of them all.

The moment the Lesser-Dragons stepped into the plaza, Liola opened his eyes, and the blood-red Aura shot out radially, shooting past the Lesser-Dragons that had gotten close. As soon as the Aura passed them, the Lesser-Dragons all turned into ashes. Liola saw the effects of his experiment turned out great, he finished the dozen or so Lesser-Dragons around the civilians, then contracted his Aura to a shield shape to protect all the civilians.

The rest were given to Baolilong to handle, while Liola thought he could probably sustain the shield for a long while. Even if he couldn't hold it until Baolilong could kill all the Lesser-Dragons, as long as there weren't many left, then he wouldn't have to worry about the safety of the civilians due to the number of enemies.

*'Papa...'*

*'What is it?'* Liola asked quietly.

*'There are a lot more Lesser-Dragons coming, so many, even more than what's here.'*

*'What!'* Liola was in shock.

### **Chapter 3 : Appearance of the Older Brother**

*'Baolilong, do you have any method to drive them away?'*

Liola had no choice but to ask. He had originally planned on dealing with all the Lesser-Dragons, so they wouldn't pose a problem once he was gone. However, judging from the current situation, it might be a problem to deal with all of them at once. Therefore, it might be better for Baolilong to demonstrate its might as the Sacred White Dragon and try to drive away these Lesser-Dragons.

*'No, papa, Baolilong did tell them before not to fight me, but they still attacked. They're so strange.'* Baolilong complained while pouting.

Liola's heart sank. It looked like the only way out of this was to fight. He had to tell Baolilong to not worry about how cooked they were, but to quickly get rid of the Lesser-Dragons because he couldn't hold on for too long.

Baolilong noticed the urgency in Liola's mind via telepathy. It didn't dare to play anymore. It immediately circled around, shooting lightning balls continuously out of its mouth.

Other than the places protected by the Red Aura, everywhere else looked like the end of the world: bolts of lightning flying every which way. Not only did the bolts destroy Lesser-Dragons, they had often landed on structures. Many of the houses had now been leveled.

*"Mama, our house..."*

The boy had been hiding in his mother's arms, but as soon as he saw where they had lived being hit by lightning, he let out a cry, but his mother held him even tighter in her arms, trying to make him look away from the terrifying scenes outside.

Liola didn't notice until now, they were actually destroying the homes of these civilians... but he had no other choice. If he didn't let Baolilong use large-scale attacks, and kill them one by one instead, then his Aura might not even hold up long enough to kill a fifth of all the Lesser-Dragons. So even if he was heartbroken for destroying their homes, he knew he couldn't let Baolilong stop.

"Sorry, I can't stop." Liola apologized unhappily.

The civilians froze. They had never thought Silver Mask would apologize to them. Though it was hard for them to see their homes destroyed, but at least they could keep their lives. How could they want anything else in the situation? As for Silver Mask's apology, they didn't seem to accept it, but instead they were touched he would actually say something like that.

However, Bour seemed to be furious; he said angrily, "What are you talking about! Do you really think we would blame you? We aren't ungrateful people. If you hadn't helped, we would've either died from hunger, or be eaten as food by the Lesser-Dragons. By then, even if the houses are standing still, who the hell are going to be living in them?"

As Bour spoke, everyone nodded their heads desperately, because they noticed Silver Mask's furrowed eyebrows and tightened lips, as though he was feeling guilty, and not just simply expressing his apology. This scared everyone, and they began to agree with Bour; some of them even stood up and yelled, "We will never blame Sir Silver Mask!", "Right, if it weren't Sir Silver Mask giving us meat yesterday, we might not even have the strength to stand up and run away today, not to mention Sir Silver Mask is actually helping us stop the Lesser-Dragons!"

Liola smiled slightly. Not being the most articulate person, he didn't know what to reply, so he habitually nodded, then concentrated on maintaining the shield. His duty was now to protect these people, to payback the warmth he felt in his heart as a result of their actions.

A dozen Lesser-Dragons rammed into the shield from all directions. With Liola's support, the shield still tightly protected the civilians. And then, those who dared to hit the shield were pulverized by Baolilong, who was eager to defend its papa and master, with its super-large-lightning ball.

This happened repeatedly; Liola was concentrating on maintaining the Aura shield on the inside, and Baolilong desperately using lightning to take care of Lesser-Dragons. The problem seemed to be contained, and the situation stable, as long as nothing unexpected happened...

Unfortunately, the unexpected was already well underway. When Baolilong saw the Lesser-Dragons reaching this little city, they had already rushed in like the tide. Even if the city walls weren't destroyed by then, they were able to brute force them down with their strength and numbers.

*'Why? Why would the Lesser-Dragons enter such a meaningless little city without the slightest of hesitation?'* Liola felt uneasy in his heart; could it be because of him? Were these sent by the Dragon Emperor? If that was the case, then didn't he just become the reason why the civilians were in danger? After thinking about this, his face darkened.

The people misunderstood his expression; they thought Silver Mask's change of expression was because there were too many Lesser-Dragons and he could no longer maintain the shield.

"Silver Mask..." Bour suggested kindly, "If you really can't hold on, then fly away with the women and children. At least you can save some of us, we will already be thankful, truly!"

Truthfully, this had crossed Liola's mind before. He could take the people he cared about, such as the mother, the child, and Bour, etcetera. As for everyone else... he turned around to look, and everyone was looking at him anxiously; some people have already accepted their fate, and warmly trying to persuade their wives and children, whom remained firm about staying and not leaving.

Perhaps some people thought about their fates, and couldn't help but cry, but they still suppressed their voice, so it wouldn't affect others. Some children didn't seem to care, and cried instead, not wanting to leave their mothers.

"Go, Silver Mask, you've done everything you can for us." Bour kept suggesting; he didn't want to see a kind Knight like him to lose his life here.

*'No! I can't abandon these people.'* Liola made up his mind. These people had made him feel warm inside again and again, and it reminded him of his brother Mocha's smile. Just for that reason alone, he wouldn't abandon these.

"I don't want to leave. If I can't hold on, I will ask Baolilong take some people with it." Liola said calmly. After that, he didn't waste any more of his focus on anything other than holding the shield, so Baolilong could take care of the enemies.

"Silver Mask!" Bour yelled in shock, but Liola completely ignored him. Bour wouldn't dare to go shake Silver Mask, because he didn't know if it would affect this red shield of his.

In that instant, he was completely helpless; other people also shouted Silver Mask's name, trying to say things like "don't be stubborn" and "value your own life", but Liola didn't have any reaction at all. He was now completely focused on maintaining the shield.

Despite Baolilong's eagerness to protect its papa and master, with its continuous lightning balls, but there were simply far too many Lesser-Dragons. For every one Lesser-Dragon falling from the lightning, two charged up to take its place. For every row of Lesser-Dragons falling, another row of them came up. For Baolilong, who hadn't completely matured, it was very taxing to its body. Slowly, the lightning coming out of Baolilong's mouth became slower and weaker.

Liola knew Baolilong was already tired, and it was simply trying to keep going without telling him, but he knew Baolilong couldn't hold out for much longer just by looking at it.

Liola was very worried how long Baolilong could keep going, especially when the number of Lesser-Dragons he could see had not decreased at all. He knew, it might be impossible to depend on Baolilong to clear all of the Lesser-Dragons.

However, there was no other way in the present situation. He was now completely helpless... Liola had rarely felt pain of this helplessness, because whenever it happened before, there was always someone who could help him resolve it... someone?

*'Kaiser! If they're close by, they could come to rescue them.'* Liola immediately told Baolilong via telepathy to look for Kaiser and others.

*'Do you really want to look for them, papa?'* Baolilong seemed to hesitate.

*'What are you saying? Of course I do, we had already been looking for Kaiser before...'* Liola asked Baolilong back strangely.

*'But before, papa didn't really want to look for Kaiser, but instead you were just saying, but you didn't think about finding them, so Baolilong didn't ask Flames.'* Baolilong pouted, confused as to why papa words were different than his thoughts.

Liola was shocked. He didn't really want to find Kaiser? Was that really how it was?

The shock he received affected his Aura; his previously stable Aura had now become a bit precarious. With the ramming of the Lesser-Dragons, the Aura began to shake, causing the people inside to scream out loud. This sound seemed to have made Liola recover his thoughts. He took another few deep breaths, to try to temporarily suppress the shock from what Baolilong said.

*'It's fine. Ask Flames, how far away are they?'* Liola calmed down his thoughts, and the Aura resumed its previously secure form.

*'Okay, papa.'*

"Silver Mask, listen to me, don't throw your life away here. Quickly carry some people and leave here."

Bour attempted to persuade desperately. The shaking of the Aura before made him believe Silver Mask couldn't hold on anymore. It's hard to blame him, because a person stopping thousands of Lesser-Dragons was completely unprecedented. It wasn't just Bour; all the other civilians began to persuade Silver Mask to leave.

Liola frowned, and used Ki to make his voice echo in everyone's ears, "Quiet!"

His voice did indeed quiet down everyone. His deep voice and his stable footing suddenly made everyone feel more secure, and they all suddenly felt like there might be a way out of this. Even Bour stopped talking, but he felt the person in front of him seemed to be unpersuadable yet he couldn't stop to trust him.

*'Papa, Flames said it's at the Commerce Alliance, and Kaiser and others are the secret base. They're both very far away.'*

Hearing Baolilong, Liola's heart sank. It seemed that hope was gone, so what could he do next?

For now, other than forcefully holding on, Liola didn't have any other choice. Minutes passed by, and the lightning out of Baolilong's mouth was far and few in between. It didn't complain, and it began to attack with its claws instead. Diving out of the sky, Baolilong clawed out a bloodied path; every Lesser-Dragon in the path had their skins ripped apart, but it seldom killed them. It often took Baolilong two to three tries, unless it happen to land on a vital spot, before it could take the Lesser-Dragons' lives.

The Lesser-Dragons' numbers should be decreasing, but when the Lesser-Dragons formed an endless sea, no one could tell if their numbers were decreasing. Especially now that Baolilong's threat of lightning was gone, the Lesser-Dragons' attacks intensified, and the pressure on Liola to maintain the Aura had increased. He knew, if this continued, he couldn't hold for long.

However, he can't just give up! He had no choice but to let the Aura drain more and more of his strength. With his estimates, he could only hold up at most another half hour before he would die from exhaustion.

Time waits for no one. As time passed by, Baolilong began to panic. It can sense the anxiety in Liola, and his ever-decreasing stamina. It desperately dived again and again, tearing deep, red wounds into the Lesser-Dragons' flash, but even more Lesser-Dragons charged at the shield. Even the bloodied wounds on their heads weren't enough to stop them.

Gradually, the wall of Aura became thinner, and Liola was at the limit of his stamina. Now, he had planned for the worst; he told Baolilong, as soon as he falls, it must take every civilian it could to fly away.

*'What about papa?'* Baolilong yelled loudly, as if it felt Liola didn't seem to want to leave.

Sure enough, Liola remained silent and didn't respond to Baolilong. He had already planned, when he exhausted all his Ki, he would use his life force to hold it up. So when he could no longer hold the shield, would be the time when his life ended, so whether they take him away... it would make no difference.

Since Baolilong was anxious, it didn't know what to do. The only choice it had was to attack the Lesser-Dragons; it thought that if it could kill off all the Lesser-Dragons, then it would be great. Baolilong's thoughts were quite simple.

Liola's Ki was now mostly gone, and the Aura wall was now paper thin. It was time to use his life force.

"Silver Mask, are you okay? You don't look so well." Bour asked worriedly. From what he saw, Silver Mask was already pale before, but now he was white as paper, and even his lips are gray.

Liola didn't hear Bour's question.

"Something's wrong with sir Silver Mask. Bour, quick, think of something!" The mother yelled anxiously.

Bour rubbed his hands together, and frowned, "B-but what could I do, he's not willing to leave. He's stubborn! Too stubborn!" Though the words sounded like he was blaming Liola, but tears rolled out of Bour's eyes. After he wiped them off, he stared, without blinking, at Silver Mask, trying to forever remember the figure of the one who saved them.

"Woo..." The mother covered her face, and quietly wept. No matter how much she didn't want to see Silver Mask sacrifice himself, there was little she could do.

Ki... was now gone. Liola pulled himself together, and put in his life force.

*'Papa, stop!'* Baolilong now finally realized what Liola was about to do. It roared anxiously, and circled endlessly above Liola.

"What's older brother doing?" The boy peeked his head out of his mother's arms, and curiously pointed the white Dragon circling above the shield.

Bour and the mother raised their heads, and saw the white Dragon circling, with the low roar coming from its mouth sounding like weeping. Everyone now understood, the White Dragon was worried for its master. This clearly showed, Silver Mask definitely couldn't hold out much longer.

"Please just leave us!" The mother continued to weep.

Bour finally could no longer stand by. He pounced towards the only person standing, Silver Mask, hoping to catch his attention. He didn't expect that this action would've made the man who held down thousands of Lesser-Dragons fall. Bour immediately climbed up, and held up Silver Mask. He didn't realize until now, Silver Mask had already passed out.

Because Silver Mask fainted, the shield had now immediately disappeared. There was now nothing stopping the Lesser-Dragons from the civilians. The civilians had now froze; facing the giant, drooling, and stinking mouth of the Lesser-Dragons, many seemed to already be prepared to be eaten as food. Suddenly, a giant lightning ball exploded above the civilians, and the electricity expanded in all directions. Even if it didn't electrocute the Lesser-Dragons, it did paralyze their bodies for a long while.

Bour carried up Silver Mask, and yelled loudly into the sky, "White Dragon, hurry and come get your master!"

Baolilong's attention, however, was drawn towards something not far away. It was now ecstatic, because it had already seen the arrival of help. It roared loudly towards the sky, to attract the attention of the help.

Bour saw Baolilong's actions, and he was confused. After looking towards the direction Baolilong faced, he realized a flock of small black dots in the sky. What could that be... could those be flying Dragons? Or something else? Bour narrowed his eyes, trying to see them clearly...

"Knights!" Bour yelled loudly, and he couldn't hold back the elation. That's right, he saw a whole team of Knights flying towards them.



Before long, the Knights arrived. At least seventy percent of them had Dragons as a mount, and they were all at least Blue Ranked. They were all wearing a Dragon-shaped insignia, signifying they were Knights from the Dragon Empire.

As soon as the Knights reached the small city, they began to attack the Lesser-Dragons. The Fire Dragons spit out fire enough to melt steel, the Ice Dragons pinned the Lesser-Dragons to the ground with ice bolts, the Wind Dragons called forth tornados that made the Lesser-Dragons collide into one another, and the Earth Dragons summoned walls from the earth, making the charging Lesser-Dragons smash head-first into the walls and breaking their bones.

A Knight with a deep coffee colored Dragon circled above the civilians, and yelled, "Is everyone okay? Is anyone hurt?"

Remembering Silver Mask on his arms, Bour immediately yelled, "Yes! Yes! There's a passed out Knight here."

"A Knight?"

The Knight on top of the Dragon was clearly surprised. After telling his Dragon to support the others, and he jumped off from the Dragon. Now, the crowd finally could clearly see this Knight was wearing silver-lined white Knight's uniform. Everyone knew, the Knights with white uniform excel in healing Magic.

All the civilians voluntarily backed up to make a path for this Knight. The Knight was stupefied. Ever since the Dragon Empire exiled the Aklan civilians, he had never received such treatment. Whenever he went, even if he was there to save them, the civilians had never treated him well.

The mother rushed up, and grabbed this Knight's hands, then pleaded, "Please, hurry and heal Silver Mask."

"Silver Mask?" The Knight was now in shock. He obviously knew about Silver Mask, the apprentice of the legendary Paladin. However, he even knew the more shocking true identity of this person.

*'Could it really be him?'* The Knight's face sank, and walked up to Bour. He lightly brushed away Silver Mask's black hair, and saw his elegant and handsome face.

He took a deep breath, and courteously performed a Knight's salute, "Successor, Your Highness."

Everyone who heard froze, especially Bour; he was still carrying the 'successor' in his hands.

"Please, put the successor on the ground, so I can examine him." The Knight seemed to have noticed his actions shocking everyone around. He tried to smile warmly towards Bour.

Bour obediently laid Silver Mask down, his head was still completely blank.

"Hmm... he passed out because his Aura had been exhausted." The Knight examined and diagnosed the successor's condition. He was helpless to such a matter; the only thing they could do was to let the successor rest, so he could regain his strength.

"Feir! Can you heal them yourself? Do you need any help?" Another man wearing a White Knight's uniform yelled in the air.

"He's not hurt, just exhausted all his Aura." Feir replied loudly.

"Understood, then hurry and come fight."

Feir blinked. If he went to fight, and left the fainted successor without anyone to look after, he probably would get blamed into the ground. However, if he yelled to explain "the successor is here", perhaps a bunch of Knights would trip from the shock, and then the sky might start "raining Knights". After thinking about that, Feir sighed, and smiled bitterly, "Nah, I better stay here and look after him."

The other Knight shrugged, then rejoined the fight.

Feir lowered his head, and looked at the black-haired man with closed eyes. Silver Mask, Liola, and successor... all of this man's identities were equally shocking.

"He's the successor? That's impossible!" Bour yelled loudly, "How can Silver Mask be that bastard of a successor who drove us out of our homes?!"

The mother was clearly clueless. How could the kind Silver Mask be the successor who gave the orders so the civilians couldn't go home, the one who abandoned all the civilians, and even sent Knights to interrogate the civilians in order to find spies and therefore was commonly cursed among the civilians?

Bour's roars and yells were also heard by others. Everyone's reactions were near identical: first it was shock, then they were filled with rage, to the point where they almost forgot who was protecting them just moments ago. They began to curse the evil actions of the successor again.

"Please calm down." Feir noticed something wrong, and immediately began to speak, "Please let me explain."

Bour roared, "Fine", and suppressed the discussions of the civilians. With a darkened face, he didn't seem to care the person in front of him was a silver Knight, he said without any courtesy, "Speak."

Seeing everyone calming down, Feir fixed his thoughts, then began to explain, "Truthfully, I only knew some of facts. I had already known him for a long time; Liola... or 'Silver Mask' as you've called him, was not the successor back then. As far as I knew, at the time, even he himself didn't know he was a Prince."

Bour frowned, because he now suddenly knew Silver Mask had another name.

"Then, he disappeared for quite some time... when he appeared again, the Dragon Empire had declared him as the successor." Feir smiled bitterly, remembering back then, even he was deep in shock.

"Even if so, what does that have to do with what the bastard successor had done?" Bour roared.

"Please, just listen to me," Feir showed a serious face, "I promise you on my Knight's honor, I would absolutely never believe the Liola I knew would do those things, the things you called the evil acts from the bastard successor. There must be some reason we don't know."

Bour and everyone were quiet, and they didn't know how to react. After all, they were all recipients of Silver Mask's kindness. They don't want to treat Silver Mask as the bad guy, but what the successor had done now made them feel angry and scared. If the successor really was a bad person, why would he have helped them for the past few days?

"Let me tell you why, Feir." A calm yet sorrow-threaded voice could be heard, and the silver-eyed man continued. He wanted to clarify what had happened with everyone. It wasn't that he wanted to defend himself, but he simply wanted to them the truth. The burden of carrying the truth himself alone was far too painful for him.

"Wait." Feir suddenly interrupted, "Can you wait until the Knights finish their battles and they can also hear the story?"

Liola glanced at Feir, then nodded.

When the Lesser-Dragons were all either killed by the Knights or ran, Feir gathered all the Knights, then simply told them their successor was there... Sure enough, a dozen or so Knights jumped off their Dragons. Then, the Knights and the civilians, gathered around Liola in a circle, and quietly awaited for him to talk.

Liola looked at Baolilong, and reached out his hand to touch its head, then lightly began to tell his story, “At first, I thought I was an alien from another world; it wasn’t until later that I found out this was actually my world...”

## **Chapter 4 : The King’s Desire**

“... Brother Mocha’s death woke me, and I was able to escape.” Liola explained everything in detail without holding anything back, regardless of whether it was civilians or Dragon Empire Knights around him.

After the storytelling had ended, everyone remained quiet. The only sound that could be heard in the plaza was the breathing noises of the Dragons— it was dead silence otherwise. But they can’t really be blamed; something as bizarre as this wasn’t something the civilians could imagine. Even the Knights seemed shocked during the story, especially when Liola spoke of the truth about the heart of the Dragon Emperor.

“This is some rather unordinary secrets.” Feir smiled bitterly. He had only hoped Liola would explain his earlier actions, so the civilians and Knights wouldn’t misunderstand him, but now that he dragged out such shocking truths... could this be good or bad?

“So that’s how things were. So basically, you were being controlled by the Dragon Emperor, and that’s why you did such things. Then we can’t really blame you, we should blame the Dragon Emperor... Wait, the heart of the Dragon Emperor is the one to be blamed.” Bour said, “I can’t believe there’s such a strange heart in the world; it’s really strange.”

“However, those evil acts were really done by me, and I have nothing to say about them.” Liola tilted his head, trying to look away from the hatred in people’s eyes.

Unexpectedly, Liola’s head connected with a fist. Bour snapped, “What the hell are you saying? If I got food poisoning, am I supposed to blame the waiter for bringing the food rather than the chef who cooked it? Nonsense.”

Liola touched his head in surprise, and his stupefied look made everyone laugh. But Baolilong didn’t laugh; it pounced, pushed Bour onto the ground, and shouted, “Don’t hit my papa!”

“Aiya, I didn’t hit your papa. I was joking with him, joking! Aiya! Stop.” Bour awkwardly tried to dodge Baolilong’s nails. Though it was in its human shape and

its nails weren't sharp as those of a Dragon, Bour still received red scratch marks all over him. He looked like someone who got dragged out by his wife after she found him with his mistress.

"Baolilong, stop acting like that." Liola was surprised; he hurriedly tried to grab ahold of Baolilong to stop it from putting any more wounds on Bour. However, because he was exhausted, as soon as he grabbed Baolilong, he began to fall sideways. Bour noticed, and hurried up to grab Liola. But because of the momentum, all three of them fell down together.

Everyone froze. At that moment, no one thought about helping them up. Bour tried to catch his breath and said, "Ah... I can't believe I'd have the honor in this life to fall with a prince."

"Ahaha", someone in the crowd started to laugh. The sound of laughter rippled through the crowd like a rubble thrown into a lake, and finally everyone was laughing: Holy Knight, Dark Knight, women with aprons, hotel owners carrying all of his money, and all kinds of people, all laughed with one another.

After laughing for a long while, people finally refrained their laughs. Feir smiled as he held up the successor, "You've worked hard to protect these civilians, let me help you get to a place for some rest."

Feir said to others, "Everyone else help these civilians sort out a place to live. Don't forget to get some food for them to eat!"

"No problem, Feir, you go help the successor to get some rest." The Knights smiled and replied loudly.

Feir helped Liola into a house that was still mostly intact, helped him sit down next to a table, and said, "Sit for a bit, I'll go help make a bed."

Liola stopped Feir; when the latter turned around to look curiously, he explained, "You can stop using those honorifics to address me. You know... I'm not a successor, or actually, I should say I'm not even a prince; not like Lanski or Cappuccino, you should know..." Liola couldn't find the right words to explain it to Feir.

"Really?" Feir smiled warmly, "But in my eyes, what you did to protect those civilians makes you look like a true royalty."

It was now Liola's turn to look at Feir curiously.

Seeing this, Feir gave up on making a bed, because the successor looked like he didn't want to sleep. Feir walked to the table, and asked with a smile, "May I sit down, please?"

"You're Purity's brother, you don't have to be so... respectful." Liola frowned slightly.

Feir smiled, and didn't explain any further. If he was truly being respectful, he wouldn't be asking such a question, and instead of sitting down, he should be standing next to the successor. However, he knew being respectful towards Liola would make him feel strange, so he stopped talking in a respectful tone, and said directly, "Speaking of Purity, why didn't you go back to find Kaiser? But since he and Daylight are wanted, I don't know where they're hiding. However, I believe my sister knows."

"I'm lost..." Liola said truthfully.

"Lost?" Feir seemed confused, "If you were lost, you could've gotten Baolilong to ask Flames. Although Flames was in the Commerce Alliance and we're quite far from it, the Sacred White Dragon should have strong enough power to communicate with it."

Liola was silent for a bit, and then he explained, "Baolilong said, it was because I didn't want to go back, so it didn't contact Flames."

Feir looked at him for a while, nodded and said, "I see, that I can understand."

It was Liola's turn to pause. Understood? Even though he himself couldn't understand, Feir was able to understand?

"Don't worry, this is quite normal. After hearing those complicated secrets of yours, even I began to feel afraid, so it's understandable for you to be afraid." Feir said calmly, "However, you can't run forever. After you rest, you should return and carry out your duties."

"What duties?" Liola paused.

"The duties of a successor, of course." Feir stared straight at him, without giving him any chance to run away.

"I'm not... the successor. The Dragon Emperor wouldn't possibly keep me as a successor." Liola denied in reflex.

"That's not what I think." Feir was deep in thought for a moment, "Think about it, Prince Mocha and Prince Latte are both dead. There are only three candidates left for the throne: Prince Cappuccino, Princess Lanski, and you. As you've explained, they both know the truth. Since all three of you know the truth now, you guys are now on equal footing in that regard. I mean, if the Dragon Emperor was still the one choosing."

"And as such, of course he would pick the strongest among you." Feir raised his head, "Since you are the strongest, and you already are the successor, instead of changing the successor and make his people feel unrest, he might as well try to catch you instead."

Hearing Feir's accurate analysis, Liola's body shrank and his face darkened. When Feir saw him, and smiled apologetically, "Sorry for making you feel uneasy, but everything I said is true."

"Besides, even if the Dragon Emperor dissolve you from being the successor, if the only remaining royalty, Cappuccino and Lanski, supports you as the next Dragon Emperor, everyone will still recognize you as the successor. In fact, even if your siblings don't support you, there were quite a few Princes in history who had successfully usurped the throne despite being hated by their father. Those who had been accepted by the Sacred White Dragon, despite all other factors, had almost always become the next Dragon Emperor, be it usurping or succeeding."

Feir looked at Baolilong, who was lying next to Liola's legs, and said, "Therefore, having the acceptance of the Sacred White Dragon is basically half way to becoming the Dragon Emperor; this is something everyone knows."

"But I don't want to be the Dragon Emperor." Liola stood up emotionally, but being as exhausted as he was, he fell back down almost at the same instant. He said bitterly, "I don't know how to be a Dragon Emperor."

"Judging from what I saw, you seem to know it quite well." Feir said casually as he picked up a can on the table with tea leaves inside. He smelled it to make sure it was still good, then poured the tea leaves into a pot, poured in water, and plugged it in to heat up.

Liola frowned, "I don't know what you mean."

"What do you think the duty of an Emperor is?" Feir smiled, and patiently began to guide the future Dragon Emperor.

"I don't know." Liola shook his head; he really didn't know how to be one.

“A supposed Emperor means to give everything in his power to make his people happy.”

Liola looked at Feir skeptically. This was far different from what he had experienced.

“This is what my mother taught me.” Feir smiled and said, “She is a great Commander, and also a great mother. Ever since I was young, she kept telling me what the leader of the people must do.”

Liola paused. It wasn’t until now that he remembered, Feir was the son of a Commander, and he would likely be a leader in the future — of course, unless Purity replaced him.

“My other and the other two Commanders actually decided not to continue having three Commanders.” Feir explained, “Their bonds of friendship run deep, so they don’t have to worry about infighting. However, my generation is far different. Jetter hates me to the bone, and he couldn’t possibly work with me.”

“He hates you?” It was hard for Liola to imagine someone hating Feir. To him, Feir was a very amiable person, and so was Purity.

“Mhm, he also hates Purity.” Feir smiled bitterly, “In fact, he probably knew, there will only be one Commander. The current three Commanders told me, that person will be me.”

Liola paused, and asked back, “So you’re also an Emperor?”

“You could say that.” Feir joked, “So, we could exchange some ideas of being a King. It would be great if Meinan was also here, so we could have a small ‘King meeting’.”

“This isn’t funny.” Liola shook his head.

Feir stopped smiling, and nodded seriously, “Indeed, this isn’t funny. If there is a King who was unwilling to be King, the whole world wouldn’t find it funny.”

“Can’t someone else be the King...? Both Cappuccino and Lanski would do better than me.” Liola felt frustrated. Why must he be the Dragon Emperor? He had never thought about being the Dragon Emperor.

Feir shook his head and smiled, “That’s what you think. To me, Prince Cappuccino’s personality is a wanderer. To make him stay in the palace would be like torture to him.”



"Princess Lanski may be brave and honest, but she isn't adaptable. Being a King can't always be completely straightforward." Feir smiled as if there were deeper meanings.

"Your smile looks a lot like Qiusi, very cunning." Liola looked at Feir strangely.

Feir's smile froze, and continued forcefully, "Looks like your observational abilities are better than the Princess. This is bad news to both me and Meinan. It looks like it would be hard for us to take advantage of the Dragon Emperor in the future."

Liola shook his head, "Meinan wouldn't take advantage of me, and neither would you."

"Don't trust me too much." Feir smiled meaningfully again.

"I trust Purity." Liola maintained his stance.

Feir's smile froze again. He began to think, perhaps he would be better off supporting Princess Lanski for the throne?

"As you can see, you are indeed the best candidate to the throne, right?" Feir smiled as he scratched his face.

"I..." Liola drew a blank, "That's not the same. I-I don't know how to handle all the politics."

"You have Kaiser."

"I don't understand Knights, so I can't manage a Kingdom of Knights." Liola tried to refute again.

"And you have Daylight." Feir shrugged again, and said, "Even the friends you've made are just right. In the Aklan Troublemaking Squad, Kaiser can help you with politics, Daylight can help you manage Knights. As for diplomacy, Meinan is the future Prime Minister of Aklan, and Purity can... keep me in check, although I really don't want to say it that way. Also, you are friends with the strongest people in this world, such as Mizerui, Barbalis, Lancelot, Blood Wolf, Gladiolus, etcetera. This is all very important."

Liola revealed a strange expression, and asked hesitantly, "If everything can be handled by other people, then... what exactly do I have to do?"

"You are the center of the net that connects everyone. This is the duties of a King." Feir stood up and said seriously, "Liola, did you know? You have the big advantage

that even I, as someone who had been preparing to become King for the last decade, don't have."

Feir suddenly sat back down, and smiled bitterly, "I can imagine, when you become the Dragon Emperor, you will have unprecedented power. What's funny is, the reason why you'll have all this power, is because you possess the personality of not wanting those power. This results in everyone standing by your side, and not worried about you plotting against them."

Hearing Feir's explanation, Liola was silent. This was all something he had never thought about, but...

Feir probably also knew, something like this couldn't be hurried. He remembered when he first found out about him being King, he was also terrified and felt clueless. Thinking about that, he couldn't refrain revealing a smile of understanding to the future King in front of him, who was still younger than him.

He said warmly, "Don't rush it. Think about it slowly. You've exhausted your Aura today, so you should be tired, right? Sleep for a while first. When you're too tired, you might be a bit narrow minded."

Liola nodded, letting Feir help him to lie down on a bed.

"Rest well." Feir smiled, then left the room.

Liola stared blankly at the ceiling. The reasons for him to become the Dragon Emperor went through his mind, but none of them made him happy, nor did anyone made him "want" to be the Dragon Emperor.

*'A few hundred reasons aren't enough. I just need one reason, one that makes me want to become the next Dragon Emperor.'*

\* \* \*

Perhaps as a result of exhausting his Ki, Liola had seldom slept this well, almost to the point of forgetting to put up his guard. It wasn't until he woke up that he heard and felt Baolilong still lying against him, sound asleep. This young adult had to use all of its energy to spit out lightning balls to attack its papa's enemies, and now it was probably exhausted as well.

Liola got up, but unexpectedly woke Baolilong. It rubbed its eyes, and then climbed on top of papa's body, as if it were still a child, and trying to push itself into papa's arms. It complained with a sleepy voice, "Papa, Baolilong is very, very hungry, meat~"

Liola smiled, and picked up the not-so-small Dragon, then walked out. As soon as he left the room and walked to the place where he talked to Feir last night, he saw a pail full of water and a towel. Liola felt thankful for Feir's thoughtfulness. Being as tired as he was, he did indeed need some water to wash.

After briefly washing himself and Baolilong, Liola thought about the civilians' situations. Plus, the Dragon that was now fully awake was moaning loudly from being hungry. He then took it out of the room, hoping to barbecue some meat for civilians and Baolilong before the Lesser-Dragons would decay.

After opening the door, the bright sunlight temporarily blinded Liola. He used his hand to block away the light and awaited for his eyes to adjust, but the Baolilong, whom he was holding on his right hand, had already charged forward unable to wait while yelling "meat".

"Big brother, this piece of meat is for you. It's the biggest one."

When Liola's eyes finally focused, the first thing he saw was a piece of meat in the boy's arms, and he was happily giving it to Baolilong. Baolilong happily grabbed it, and began to chew it after a large bite. But when it turned around, it saw the boy gulping as he looked at it eating the meat. Baolilong was generous unlike before, and it tore off a piece of meat the size of a fist, then put it in front of the boy, "You gave Baolilong meat, so Baolilong also give you meat."

The boy showed a happy smile. After taking the meat, he sat down next to Baolilong, and started eating with it.

Seeing the situation, Liola unconsciously began to smile. Then he noticed what was happening in the entire city: the Knights were all working together; some were cutting the giant Lesser-Dragons into pieces of meat, some were responsible for using their Aura to cook the meat. Perhaps it was the first time they used such a method to cook, since their inexperience were revealed with the frequent smell of burning. Bour was guiding them on the side, telling them how Silver Mask did it, and how great the meat was when he cooked them.

The Knights didn't seem frustrated; praising the successor they were loyal to, seemed to make them more happy than actually praising them.

That was not all; the city walls that looked like ruins yesterday because of the Lesser-Dragons now looked orderly. Though the destroyed houses had still not been repaired, all the rubbles from yesterday had been completely cleaned away.

The main contributor to that, was of course the civilians as well as the Knights, whose faces and clothes had now been covered with dust, even though the Knights

had originally wore clean clothes. Some of the Knights even accidentally set themselves on fire while cooking the meat, and they were jumping around, trying to extinguish the fire from their pants, and this scene made the all civilians around them laugh.

Liola felt the cheerfulness of the scene. In the bright sunlight, the Knights and civilians were all laughing with one another. Even if their homes were in shambles, the gloominess didn't seem to infect their smiles at all.

*'Ah... if everyone could smile like this forever, how great it would be.'* Liola smiled unconsciously, and he felt warmth in his heart, to the point where it was hotter than the sunlight.

"Aiya, Silver Mask." Bour finally noticed Liola's arrival. After shouting loudly, Liola looked towards him, with a bright smile on his face. This made Bour freeze.

Everyone had now noticed Liola. Before the civilians even had time to greet him, the Knights had already stood up straight, and respectfully performed a Knight's salute towards him, then awaited for the successor's response.

"Don't mind me, you guys continue." Liola tilted his head, then added, "Just smile like you guys were."

The Knights blinked, obviously not sure of what the successor meant; did the successor want them to smile?

Liola didn't understand it either; why did everyone stop laughing? This made him feel a bit disappointed. He then pointed at himself, then started to smile brightly, "Like this, smile happily."

This bright smile made everyone stare in awe. To them, it was like the clouds of a dark night had suddenly dispersed, and the moon had covered the world with moonlight; it was an indescribable feeling of awe.

The crowd still didn't smile, and froze instead. Liola couldn't help but touch his own face; did he smile strangely? As for their stares, he looked back at them perplexedly, and his silly look made everyone burst into smile again.

Now, Liola was even more clueless; why did everyone start to smile again?

"Liola, you are a natural talent at being King."

Liola turned to find Feir holding some food and standing next to him with a smile.

Perhaps because he could see Liola's doubts in his eyes, Feir raised his brows, then gestured at the crowd's happy laughter and explained, "Look, every move you make affects these civilians. You dissolved everyone's suspicions and doubts without even knowing it. You know, yesterday, there were still civilians and Knights who didn't believe what you said, but just now, those people were the ones who laughed the loudest."

Liola wasn't sure what Feir meant, but one thing he was sure of, "I like to see everyone smile."

"Unfortunately, in the days that follow, it wouldn't be easy to smile anymore." Feir said somewhat pitifully.

"Why?" Liola asked back almost immediately.

"The Dragon Emperor had already summoned the Knights to go back. We were originally sent to find you." Feir glanced at Liola, then added, "We didn't report the fact that we found you."

"The Knights were still arguing yesterday, whether to serve you, or the Dragon Emperor." Feir smiled, "Of course, it's not possible for me to serve you, as I've never served the Dragon Empire's royalties."

"They don't believe what I said? The Dragon Emperor isn't a good man."

"No." Feir showed a strange smile, "They do believe you, but you underestimate how loyal Knights are to the Dragon Emperor. It was a simple desire to take over the world, and perhaps many Knights would interpret the Dragon Emperor as being ambitious and it would be a good thing, just that his methods would bring a chill to people. Nevertheless, even the terrifying existence of the heart of the Dragon Emperor might not be able to make most of the Knights betray their King."

"These Knights are a bit special." Feir took a deep breath, "I'm talking about the fifty or so Knights here, and there are two more groups, totalling to about two hundred people. We are a... not exactly an organization, but Knights who share a common factor: we're skeptical about the Dragon Emperor, and you have resolved that confusion for us yesterday."

Liola looked with Feir with surprise, but Feir continued as though he didn't see Liola's expression, "I've been looking for you, Liola. When Purity told me what happened, I've always thought you had something to do with the Dragon Emperor's secrets, and I'm not the only one looking for you — those two hundred Knights are just like me. They hoped to find you and find out what the problems were, and decide whether the person they were loyal to was indeed worth their trust."

"I think you've already help them make up their minds." Feir smiled lightly, "Since the problem is with the heart of the Dragon Emperor and not the royal blood itself, as long as they support you, a Prince who had not been corrupted by the heart, they can be true to their hearts while still not betraying the Royal Family."

"Liola, would you be willing to work towards being a King?" Feir turned his head, gazing into Liola's eyes.

"I..."

Liola was speechless. At the same time he realized, everyone were now listening close to them: the Knights and the civilians, they had all encircled them, and their eyes were focused on none other than Liola.

Liola suddenly realize: the idea of being the Dragon Emperor was not as repulsive to him as it was yesterday. Why? What changed his own thoughts?

"It would be great if you were the Dragon Emperor." Bour said earnestly.

Liola asked with confusion, "Why? I don't know if I could be a good Dragon Emperor; perhaps I might end up being even worse."

Bour scratched his head, "I don't know how to say this, but I just think you would be a good Dragon Emperor. You like us, right? That's great then."

"You also like to smile, and you like people smiling even more. I believe a person who like to see others smiling would never be a bad King." The mother walked up, and smiled kindly.

"Because, you would do everything in your power to make everyone smile, wouldn't you?"

Liola trembled strongly. Making everyone smile? He couldn't help but began to think. All he could do now was do everything he could to make the thousands of civilians in this city smile, but if he were a King, would he be able to make more people smile? So it wasn't just civilians, Knights, and everyone else, could be entrenched in smiles like just now. Could this scene of smiles expand to the entire... entire world?!

"I..." Liola raised his head, and the world suddenly look bright to him, because now he had a goal, one that made him feel happy just thinking about it.

Liola's eyes glanced across everyone, he opened his mouth slightly, but this simple action made everyone hold their breaths and waited, "I want to make everyone

happy, so that everyone would smile as they have today. If being King can achieve this goal, then I will do everything I can to be King, and make the world be filled with smiles everyday.”

“Make the world be filled with smile everyday.” Feir showed a bright smile, “Crap, even I want to be serve you.”

The Knights and the civilians all smiled. Wanting to be King for such a reason was probably unprecedented.

“Please accept our loyalty.”

All the Knights half knelt, formed a fist with their right hand, and pounded their left chest.

## **Chapter 5 : Ambush on the Secret Base**

Daylight held the pike in his hand, and there were bags on the sides of his body, each filled with heavy weights. The other Knights looked similar to Daylight: various large bags hang on their bodies while brandishing their own weapons. Some were also running in circles around the base, and some had their backs to mountains and sparring with one another.

Though it didn’t look there were many things on Daylight’s body, the Knights around him wouldn’t dare to underestimate him. In the days they’ve spent with him, they had already known Daylight was the one who would lead by example. Though the sacks weren’t huge, the bags were filled with gold, which was much heavier than the iron in others’ sacks.

Though Daylight’s mission was to supervise and guide the Knights, he didn’t forget his own training. When the Knights see him following the other Knights who were running around, some of them also followed. Then he would often spend an hour or two doing basic moves. Had it not been the fact that the Knights has seen Daylight sit still quietly to read, they might have thought of him as a hyperactive person who couldn’t stop moving.

But because of this, everyone admired him greatly. No one would complain about the training regimen he had assigned for them because Daylight would do the same thing a few times over the work he assigned, thus nobody felt like they had the right to complain.

Look! Daylight had just finished circling the base with others, and while everyone was trying to catch their breaths, he was looking around, trying to decide which training he should join... But as he did so, he saw a baby-faced boy with weed-like green hair closing in from afar with a darkened face; hundred meters, fifty meters, ten meters... his speed was so fast that it looked like he was teleporting.

Finally, Kaiser's face appeared close to Daylight's eyes. His blue eyes seemed to be spitting out fire. Daylight blinked, and as Kaiser had wished, asked pleadingly, "What happened?"

Kaiser narrows his eyes, and roared deeply, "Liola ran away."

"Huh? Really?" Daylight was ecstatic; in other words, he had finally woken up?

But then he thought, wait, if Liola had escaped from the Dragon Emperor, this would be something good, so why would Kaiser look so angry? He frowned, then asked perplexedly, "Then why are you mad, Kaiser? Aren't you happy he ran away?"

"Of course I'm mad!" Kaiser roared like he was going crazy, and he poked Daylight's chest with his finger, "Lemme ask you, lemme ask you!"

"Fine, fine, go ahead and ask." Daylight took a few steps as a result of the poke, and answered as he smiled bitterly.

"According to our scouts, it has been quite a few days since Liola escaped. Baolilong is also *definitely* with him. BUT! Did you hear anything about them from Flames?" Kaiser gritted his teeth. He swore to the heavens, the first thing he was going to do when he sees Liola was to tear his face into pieces.

"Well, no." Daylight shockingly realized Liola had not made any contact with them, then immediately asked worriedly, "Could something have happened to him?"

Hearing Daylight's question, Kaiser seemed to have deflated. He snapped back, "How would I know? That guy always run into troubles."

"What if the Dragon Emperor had already recaptured him, what do we do then? What if he turned back into Silver Moon, or what if..." Daylight crossed his arms, and began to pace back and forth.

"What if you keep continuing and I die from being annoyed by you!" Kaiser impatiently grabbed Daylight's shoulder, so his pacing wouldn't annoy him even more, "The reason why I'm here is to tell you to contact Flames, so we can find out where that guy actually went."



"Oh, right, we still have Flames." Daylight didn't remember until now; he then hurried to contact Flames.

*'Baolilong's Highness? It didn't contact me, master.'*

*'Try to find a way to contact Baolilong.'* Daylight immediately replied.

*'Okay.'*

After a while, Flames' message reached Daylight, *'I can't, it's too far. I can't contact Baolilong's Highness with my abilities, unless Baolilong's Highness contacts me first. Its Highness's abilities are higher than mine, so it should be able to reach me... huh? Wait, it sounds like Its Highness's voice...'*

Daylight burst out in shock, "Baolilong contacted Flames."

"What? What did it say?" Kaiser asked anxiously.

"Liola asked where we are; he's in danger, and wanted to ask us for help..." Daylight frowned, delivering Flames' message.

"That guy!" Kaiser gritted his teeth. He was so angry that he almost had an aneurysm. He tried to suppress his rage, and yelled, "Ask him where he is! I'll go over there with teleport!"

"They seem to be in a small city to the south." Daylight frowned.

"A small city to the south?" Kaiser said sarcastically, "That's one clear answer!"

Daylight shook his head, "I can't help it, they don't seem to know where they are."

Kaiser smacked his head with his palm, and moaned, "Don't know where they are? Surely something that guy would do."

"Ask that guy, what kind of issues? Perhaps I could think of something."

Now it was Kaiser's turn to pace back and forth. He thought for a while, and he couldn't think of any other way, so he could only say that.

"Disconnected, their connection had ended." Daylight's face suddenly went pale, and he looked at Kaiser with the "what are we going to do now" look.

Kaiser tightened his lips, and he held his fists tight. How did it turn out like this? That guy obviously has insane abilities, so why would he always run into things he wouldn't resolve with his power?

“Daylight, take a team of Knights with flying mounts, especially mounts with the ability to shrink.” Kaiser couldn’t bother to make any jokes now, and ordered seriously, “I can probably take twenty people, and the mounts... I’ll try my best. After we move to the south, we’ll fan out and search.”

Daylight nodded. Having spent the days with the Knights, he knew of their strengths. After thinking briefly, he had decided the candidates, and he began to yell for people to look for these people.

Kaiser closed his eyes. Though his power had been steadily increasing, but teleporting twenty people and their mounts was still something he could barely handle. Nevertheless, he didn’t want to take any less, because it would mean the progress of their search would be even slower. He understood clearly, someone like Liola would never ask for help if it weren’t an emergency, so his situation must be very dire now, and there was no time to waste. Therefore, Kaiser had to gather every bit of power to take these people to the south.

He sank into his thoughts. He began to search for a place for them to land, but he was unable to expand his perception past the base, as if an invisible wall had been blocking it, and the wall was surrounding the base!

“We’ve been made!” Kaiser yelled loudly.

Everyone looked at Kaiser blankly. Kaiser began to run and yelled at Daylight panickedly, “Prepare for battle! We’ve been made! Daylight, be ready to fight!”

Daylight suddenly stopped. He didn’t doubt a word Kaiser had said. He immediately shouted on the top of his lungs to the Knights everywhere, “All Knights, listen! Go to your station immediately and prepare!”

Kaiser began to use his flying spell, and rushed quickly to the command room. As soon as he arrived, he yelled angrily at the Knight on duty, “We’ve been made! How many people are surrounding us.”

“Huh?” The Knight on duty was clearly surprised. He answered panickedly, “None, there’s not a single person on the monitors.”

Kaiser pushed away the Knight. There was a side of wall in the command room covered by monitors, practically covering every corner around the base...

Kaiser’s eyes glanced over, locking onto a small black dot in the air. He took a few deep breaths, then ordered, “This spot here, zoom in to the max.”

The Knights immediately began controlling the instruments, zooming in as much as they could to the spot Kaiser spoke of. They suddenly realized, the barely noticeable black dot was not a bird, but a person — a man wearing a strange, long, black-and-white robe.

“Mizerui?” Kaiser was shocked. Mizerui would, of course, know about this secret base. After all, he was one of the powers Qiusi had spoken about.

*‘Mizerui was captured by the Dragon Emperor. The Dragon Emperor knew clearly of his power, so he should’ve done everything to prevent him from getting away.’*

*‘And why would Mizerui put the secret base on lockdown, making teleport impossible?’*

Kaiser’s face sank more and more as he thought!

*‘Is Mizerui... under the Dragon Emperor’s control?’*

Kaiser felt his heart sink. However, he had been prepared. He knew there was another powerful Magician in Dragon Emperor’s control in addition to Mizerui. How many Knights could these two Magicians teleport?

“Make an announcement; tell every Magician and Knight to go to their station.”

Kaiser murmured. The Knights around him thought he was making a big deal out of this. It was just one person, and what could this person do an entire base? Couldn’t they just send out a squad of Knights to capture him?

“Make an announcement now! Tell everyone to go to their station. The person outside is one of the top wanted criminals — Mizerui. Do not think for a second it was an accident he became a top wanted criminal.”

The Knights were shocked, and they immediately began the announcement. The base began to be in motion.

“Is the Dragon Emperor planning a final duel here?”

Kaiser frowned. Would this be related to Liola’s escape? And the danger Liola had run into. He found himself locking his eyebrows; he can’t believe both would happen at the same time. Liola was in danger, but now neither he nor Daylight could leave.

*‘That guy has quite the rotten luck, but every time he got out of it alive. He’ll be all right this time, too, right?’* Kaiser murmured to himself.

Kaiser looked at Mizerui on the screen. He was too far away for Kaiser to see the expression on his face. Without realizing, he began to remember the time when he first saw Mizerui: on the bus, he was still dreaming of catching this wanted criminal, so he would not have to worry about food or clothes anymore... who knew, his fate would run so close to this wanted criminal with a smile as if everything was a world of games.

"You idiot! If Gle were here, he would scream your head off."

Kaiser took a deep breath, putting his personal feelings aside, and commanded everything with calm and collectedness. He believed that, the only thing he could do for Mizerui now, was to defend the secret base.

\* \* \*

"Meinan!"

Purity and Flames rushed into the room, with darkened faces. Meinan, on the other hand, pulled his pale face out of the files on his desk, and asked weakly, "What's up?"

"The secret base is under attack." Purity said with difficulty.

Meinan paused, then murmured, "They've been made? That's not a big surprise. Mizerui had been captured, and the Dragon Emperor is an expert in hypnosis and control. So, finding out about the secret base was only going to be a matter of time."

"Meinan, how could you be so calm! Daylight and Kaiser are still in there!" Purity answered angrily.

Meinan smiled lightly, "Purity, don't be mad, it's not that I don't care about them, but since I handed the secret base over to them, I trust they can definitely defend it."

After hearing that, Purity was a bit calmer, but worry still hung on her face, "B-but what if that Dragon Emperor is up to something devious, and Kaiser and others couldn't hold it? Meinan, I'm really worried. They're alone in Aklan Continent and surrounded by enemies. How could I not worry?!"

Meinan was, truthfully, somewhat worried about his companions himself, but he couldn't express that fear, nor could he possibly leave where he was to help them... He suppressed the feeling of uneasiness in his heart, and said, "Purity, listen to me; we must not leave right now. If the Dragon Emperor makes a move, it would definitely raise suspicions in the Commerce Alliance. When that happens, we have

to use that sparkle to ignite the fire. The only true way to help Kaiser is getting the Commerce Alliance to be on our side.”

“Purity knows.” Purity lowered her head sadly, “But, I still want to say... we really, really want to rush over and help them, but we can’t really do that. If I don’t say that, those two might think we’re just leave them to die.”

Meinan couldn’t help but nodded. While trying to withhold his tears, he said, “You’re right, Purity, so cheer them on for both of us. Let them know that, even if we aren’t there, we will still be with them in spirit!”

“Flames, you heard him, quickly and tell them!” Purity immediately said to Flames.

Flames obediently passed the messages along. After a while, Flames spoke out the reply, “Master said, he knows, and he will do everything in his power to protect this secret base, so don’t worry. Also, Kaiser said, you’re too annoying. He’s really busy now, so don’t bother him with such useless message.”

“This guy Kaiser is such an a-hole.” Purity pouted, even though the tears flashing in her eyes clearly indicated her concern for him.

*‘Useless message?’ Meinan revealed a comforting smile, ‘I suppose it really was an useless message. Something companions would already know about one another, was it really needed to be said?’*

\* \* \*

Though he said he trusted his companions, Meinan’s heart was still filled with worries. In the past two days, he had been asking Flames about the situation at the base every few hours. Luckily, the people at the secret base were indeed worthy people selected by Qiusi. It sounded like they had secured the base, stopping the Dragon Emperor’s people dead outside of the base, and didn’t give them a single bit of advantage.

The communication Maxun rang, and Meinan naturally answered, “This is Meinan.”

“Meinan, please come to my room with Purity.” The voice of the Red Commander was on the other side of the line.

“Okay, I’ll be right there.” Meinan thought it was strange. Why would the Red Commander look for him? Or Purity for that matter.

Meinan went to Purity’s room and beckoned, “Your mother is looking for us.”

Confused, the two walked towards the Red Commander's room. While on the way, they both had their own guesses as to why they were summoned, but they decided to simply hear what she had to say.

As soon as the door was opened, they realized Red Commander was not the only person inside: in fact, all three Commanders were present, and there were even other people.

Meinan and Purity's jaws both dropped, to the point they almost detached. They would have never guessed in a million years that these people would appear together inside the Commerce Alliance.

The people present included Princess Lanski, Prince Cappuccino, and Jasmine.

There were also the two infamous Knights, Lancelot and Blood Wolf.

"W-why would you be..." Meinan practically could not speak.

Lanski, instead, interrupted Meinan. She asked worriedly, "Has Liola contacted you?"

"Liola?" Meinan paused, then shook his head.

"Is that so..." Lanski lowered her head again. She seemed to have predicted this. When Liola left, he looked like someone who wanted to escape from everything, so why would he voluntarily contact anyone?

"Let's leave Liola's matters aside." Lancelot said directly, "We're here to expose the wild ambitions of the Dragon Emperor."

Everyone's eyes widened. As a Knight who sworn loyalty to the Dragon Empire's royalty, Lancelot actually used the word "expose"; how could anyone not be surprised?

Then, Lancelot spoke what he knew of the truth, including the Heart of the Dragon Emperor, the fact that the Dragon Emperor was no longer Caffey, and the Heart's desire to take over the world. During this, everyone had lost count how many times their eyes widened, or the times they had to use their hands to hold their hearts in place.

After Lancelot finished telling them the truths, everyone paused for a long while before they could even start to discuss about the issues at hand.

"Let's focus on one thing." The Green Commander shook his head and said, "Regardless of whether the Dragon Emperor today is Caffey or that Heart of the

Dragon Emperor. As long as he is wearing that skin, he is the Dragon Emperor, and the entire Dragon Empire belongs to him. Therefore, I just have a simple question, the Dragon Emperor wants to take over the world, is that true?"

Lancelot put his right fist onto his left chest, "I swear on my Knight's Honor, the Heart of the Dragon Emperor wants nothing other more than taking over the world."

The Green Commander nodded, "Then at least now we can start to discuss how to stop this. According to what you said, Miluo is also working for the Dragon Emperor, then Aklan Continent is basically in the Dragon Emperor's hands, and the only thing left is us, the Commerce Alliance..."

"Please do not put it like this. Aklan Republic is not completely gone!" Meinan protested loudly.

The Green Commander paused. Before he had time to ask, Meinan had already began to explain, "We, Aklan Republic, are not as weak as we look. There were two reasons why we had to repeatedly retreat when facing Miluo's advances. On one hand, my father wanted to preserve our true strength, and on the other hand, he was hoping the pressure of war would result in the Commerce Alliance agreement to the alliance between our two countries. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to hold everything still to your agreement before he was attacked."

"Preserve your true strength?" The Green Commander stood up, and said with shock, "Do you really still have some power left?"

Meinan said with a deep voice, "Of course, the two companions of mine who are on the wanted list are now maintaining the Aklan secret base."

"Then that's great. We could work from both the outside and inside, to force the Dragon Emperor to return Aklan. When Aklan can return to its former glory, and with the power of Commerce Alliance, then the Dragon Emperor will never conquer the world." The Green Commander obviously thought this could be resolved easily.

"No! That's not enough." Lancelot, on the other hand, protested, "We must destroy the Heart of the Dragon Emperor, so he can never harm anyone again. Only by doing so can we actually take revenge for what he had done to Caffey."

The Green Commander shook his head, "That's something we cannot intervene. The Heart of the Dragon Emperor is an internal conflict in the Dragon Empire's Royal Family, and something we should never intervene."

"How do you plan on facing the Heart? As long as he's still the Dragon Emperor, he still has the entire Dragon Empire backing him. You couldn't possibly win a fight

against him, and you might find yourselves being called wanted fugitives who committed treason." Meinan suddenly joined the conversation.

Lancelot and Blood Wolf glanced at one another. Blood Wolf then smirked, "That's simple. As long as we're loyal to a Prince or Princess, and support them to usurp the throne, then it wouldn't be treason."

"I understand." Meinan's eyes flashed, "Then who do you plan on supporting for the throne?"

"Well..." Blood Wolf scratched his face, and noticed Meinan staring at him. He smiled bitterly, "Don't look at me like that. I know you're Liola's good friend, but now that he's gone without a trace, even if we want to support him, we can't find him."

"Liola!" Meinan sighed. If it were possible, he'd really want to see Liola on the throne. Nevertheless, he knew Liola, being the person he was, probably had no interest in being the Dragon Emperor.

"If it isn't Liola, are you not willing to help, Meinan?" Jasmine opened her mouth for the first time.

"Hmm?" Meinan frowned, "That's not the case. Even if it's Liola, I would have to set down some terms before I would help."

"Then what about others? Would you not even discuss such terms?" Jasmine asked loudly, certainly because she was thinking of her best friend Lanski.

Meinan frowned, and answered directly, "It's not that we can't even discuss the terms, but I don't trust anyone other than Liola. I'm sorry to say it like this, but Prince Mocha, Prince Cappuccino, and I, are practically complete strangers. Even princess Lanski... we've only had brief contacts."

"Brother Mocha is dead..." Lanski said with a lowered voice.

"What?" Everyone paused.

"Liola stabbed him to death!" Lanski stood up, and yelled loudly, "You tell me, would Liola come back? When he left, he acted as if he wanted to run away from this world. Is there even a possibility for him to come back?"

"Yes!"

A small voice could be heard.



Everyone looked around for the source of this voice, and they finally saw a figure next to Purity. It was a young person with red hair and gold eyes. This young person was now staring at everyone, while they didn't know where this young person had came from.

"You... are Knight Daylight's Dragon, right?" Lancelot quickly recognized this Dragon. Its master had left quite an impression with him.

"What? This is a Dragon?" The three Commanders were shocked.

"What did you mean by what you said?" Lanski quickly crouched, and grabbed ahold of Flames' shoulders.

Flames twisted around uneasily, then answered, "Its Highness Baolilong had just asked me about where Kaiser and others were. The Highness and its master seemed to be intent on looking for them. Especially when I told them that Kaiser and others were at war, they seemed to panic, and immediately began to go look for Kaiser."

"He went to look for Kaiser? Does he finally have the courage now?" Ever since parting with Liola, Lanski's face showed some happiness for the first time.

Flames tilted its head and said as it thought, "Its Highness Baolilong did mention something about its papa planning on being some sort of King, and it sounded like they were happy, so I guess so."

"Is that true?" Even Cappuccino began to jump. He asked emotionally, "Did brother really decide to be the Dragon Emperor?"

"Its Highness Baolilong did say as such..." Flames was trying to remember something.

Flames suddenly remembered, and with a clap, it said, "Right, it said its papa wanted to do so because..."

"Because he want the world to be filled with smiles, so he wanted to be the Dragon Emperor."

## **Chapter 6 : Companion's Reunion**

"How many waves of attack was that? Damn Dragon Emperor, attacking us by throwing numbers against us just because he has so many Knights."

Kaiser yelled loudly, realizing he was very hoarse. He shook his head and gulped down yet another cup of coffee. His eyes had never left the monitor screen. The Dragon Emperor's tactics in the past few days had been quite direct, obviously trying to tire them out.

The three thousand Knights were divided into three shifts, taking turns to attack, which means there were a thousand Knights attacking the base at all times! They needed basically no strategy; the Knights were all at least Blue ranked, and as Dragon Knights, they were all attacking out of the sky. The base had been withholding such immense attack.

Daylight looked at Kaiser worriedly; the latter had not stepped out of the command room for the past few days. If this continued, he would die from exhaustion. Daylight advised, "Kaiser, why don't you go rest for a bit, I'll take care of it in the mean time."

"No. You don't know anything about Magic, and the powerful Magician next to the Dragon Emperor has not appeared. If they have any sort of sinister plan, you couldn't identify it." Kaiser shook his head. If that weren't the case, he wouldn't have refused to leave.

Daylight looked at the screen and saw a sea of Knights attacking, and asked, "Kaiser, can't we go outside to engage them? Don't we have more numbers than three thousand?"

Kaiser shook his head. He said while holding his chin, "That's just on the surface. We don't have many Knights; only 500. The Magicians also lacked combat experience, and the 900 Sorcerers with special abilities don't specialize in attack magic. The Dragon Emperor on the other hand, has three thousand Knights molded by battle, with two hundred being Gold Knights. No one even knows how many years those people trained in the Dragon Empire."

"If there were enough Knights to protect the Magicians while they come out of the base, then they could just activate one large-scale magic, then it would be great. We just need to cast it once, and we can bomb those Knights all the way back to the Dragon Empire! The magic circles my grandpa researched aren't just for show!"

"Aiya! Too bad I can't possibly put the Knights and Magicians outside." Kaiser began to pull his hair wildly, "The moment they go out, they might end up being screwed by those Ice or Earth Dragons, burnt by the Fire Dragons, and then blown to the edges of the world by the Wind Dragons!"

"Don't worry, Kaiser. We have our own advantages." Daylight advised warmly, "We have the base Qiusi carefully prepared. There are all sorts of resources

stockpiled here, and we have so many Magicians that they can't possibly break the shields."

"Well, that is true. That guy Qiusi acted like he knew this was coming all along. He had already moved the resources from the city... By the looks of it, most of them were moved here. Even the capital of Aklan was practically an empty city." Kaiser said as he held his chin.

"In fact, this war doesn't even seem to be fought by us, but by the Dragon Emperor and Qiusi instead." Kaiser stared at the screen, "The Dragon Emperor favors attack, Qiusi favors defense, and even that didn't change here."

Kaiser frowned, and looked at the little black dot on the monitor that had been constantly flying above the base, "What worries me more is Mizerui. He is now certainly under the Dragon Emperor's control, and ever since the start of this fight, he had been locking down this base for the past few days. I don't think he rested at all either."

Kaiser frowned, and murmured, "No matter how strong a Magician is, he can't possibly do this! He will eventually exhaust all his power. Does the Dragon Emperor intend to kill Mizerui via exhaustion?"

"The Dragon Emperor isn't trying to kill Mizerui like that, right?" Daylight's face suddenly turned slightly pale. Mizerui had helped them several times before, and he didn't want to see him dying like this.

"I hope... not?"

Kaiser was a bit hesitant. Logically, Mizerui was a very powerful Magician, and the Dragon Emperor had no reason to kill him like this. Instead, he could use Mizerui to the fullest potential. Nevertheless, the whole attack on the base was actually kind of strange. Kaiser wondered how the Dragon Emperor was able to explain to these Knights? Could he have said this base was the spies' base?

A thought suddenly crossed Kaiser's mind, and even he himself thought it was ridiculous. Nevertheless, he asked, "Could the Dragon Emperor have gone crazy?"

"What do you mean?" Daylight didn't seem to understand.

"No, it's fine, I was just talking nonsense." Kaiser shrugged. *'It can't be, right? That's the Dragon Emperor... no, that's actually the Heart of the Dragon Emperor, a monster that survived for thousands of years. How could it have gone crazy?'*

However, as if the heavens was trying to tell Kaiser his guess was correct, the situation suddenly changed: the earth began to quake, the dust began to fly, and they saw something resembling a small mountain moving towards them quickly.

“Cameras, move closer! Hurry and capture that thing!” Kaiser yelled loudly, and the controlling Knights quickly moved the camera towards the unidentified object.

It was a wave of Lesser-Dragons, large enough to cover the entire ground. The small hill among them was the Dragon with the largest body mass — Black Dragon King, Miluo! The direction they were charging in was clearly towards the base.

Kaiser and Daylight were both confused. What’s the situation now?

“What exactly is this?”

Kaiser let his weight dropped onto the chair, and chaos filled his mind. *‘Were the Lesser-Dragons here to attack them or the Dragon Emperor? God! Nevermind that, they can’t possibly here to attack the Dragon Emperor! Unless the Dragon Emperor wanted Miluo to act as if he was here to save the base? That is quite possible.’*

“K-Kaiser...” Daylight yelled with a stutter.

“What?” Kaiser raised his head impatiently, annoyed that Daylight didn’t see he was trying to figure out what the Dragon Emperor was up to.

“The black ball in Miluo’s mouth... it’s huge!” Even Daylight didn’t know what he was saying anymore. However, he felt suffocated seeing the black ball, to the point where he could barely speak.

“What?” Kaiser looked towards the monitor. The mountain-like Miluo had already stopped, and a ball shaped object was materializing in his mouth. It was darker than a moonless night, and more imposing to their hearts than any nightmare. It was as if anyone who had seen it had witness destruction itself.

“Magicians!” Kaiser grabbed ahold of the broadcaster, “All Magicians, attention! Use all your powers to maintain the shield, this is an emergency! I repeat! Aiya, I hate talking like this. All you damn Magicians put your powers into the shield. There is one big ass spell heading our way! Use all your power to maintain the shield if you want to live!”

The people in the base immediately began to move. The Magicians all fumbled around as they ran towards the power transfer device to the shield.

The black ball became bigger and bigger, and it felt as though the surrounding air had been sucked into it, making it difficult for people to breathe. Kaiser knew very well it wasn't actually the case. Nevertheless, he took a deep breath before he said, "Just maintain the shield for now, and wait for my mark, then raise the strength of the shield to the max!"

"Kaiser..." With a pale face, Daylight's forehead was now covered in cold sweat. He didn't even try to hide his fear, "Are all large-scale Magic this terrifying?"

Kaiser shook his head, "No, this magic... this magic... might be the last move Miluo can make."

"Last move?" Daylight asked with confusion.

Kaiser smiled helplessly, "Also known as 'perish together' move, do you understand now? A magic like this is unfathomably powerful. So after casting, even if the enemy dies, the caster would die from exhaustion."

"Does that mean Miluo will die?" Daylight was shocked.

"Why don't you worry about whether we would die first?"

Kaiser's face looked complicated. It wasn't that he didn't care about Miluo, but it was more important to him to preserve the base. Out of the Magicians present, the ones who specialize in protective shield was far and few inbetween. If Qiusi had been here today, Kaiser might not be so worried. But now, they had to rely on the energy transfer apparatus to maintain the shield, and they would have to use an unimaginable amount of Magic to stop this spell... Could the apparatus hold up?

"Daylight, maybe you better... go tell the Knights to prepare for an upfront battle." Kaiser said bitterly. Though saying this diminished his prestige, but living was more important to him than saving face.

Daylight nodded. Truth was, all the Knights had been preparing at their stations, so there was nothing for Daylight to tell them. Nevertheless, he still walked out of the command room, planning on fighting with these Knights.

Kaiser looked towards Miluo again, and saw that the black ball in its mouth doubled in size. He couldn't help but feel sadness for the Black Dragon King. His last move wasn't actually used towards his enemy, but instead being used by his enemy towards his allies. Luckily his child, Baolilong, wasn't here. Otherwise, using this last move on his child would be nothing but tragic.

“What the hell is the Dragon Emperor doing by sending Miluo to attack us? Isn’t he afraid the Knights might find out his true intent? Unless... this is his way of having a showdown?” Kaiser gulped. Being enemies with a Dragon Emperor who had lost it wasn’t exactly something he found interesting.

After thinking for a while... Kaiser decided not to think about it anymore, and it was more important for him to stare at the ball coming from Miluo. Suddenly, the black ball stagnated. He knew the destructive Magic was about to activated, and whether they could fend of this attack would depend on... a mere energy transfer apparatus. It was quite a worrisome situation!

Kaiser took a deep breath. The black ball started moving!

“Now! Transfer all your Magic!”

The Magicians wouldn’t dare to hold back. They sent their Magic power towards the shield. Despite no one holding back, the transfer device had trouble handling such energy, and red lights began to blink everywhere. The strength of the shield, luckily, increased to its maximum in an instant. By now, the black ball suddenly bursted. The sphere suddenly turned into a black line drawn across the sky, and shot directly towards to the shield.

In an instant, contact was made.

The powerful collision made the entire base shake. Everyone inside had a heavy look on their faces. The Knights had to put their faith in the Magicians, but there was little more the Magicians could do: no matter how much Magic power they had, the shield’s transfer device was already at its limit. If they were to send any more power through it, it might end up exploding.

The black ray slowly pushed forward, and web-like cracks began to be seen from the shield. Judging from the situation, it was a matter of time the black ray would emerge victorious, assuming nothing else happened.

Seeing the cracks enlarging, Kaiser’s face sunk further and further. When he heard a cracking sound from the monitor, he yelled into the broadcaster, “Send all your Magic in, who the hell cares! Send it all!”

With such a direct command, the Magicians immediately began to transfer more Magic without any hesitation. The meter measuring the strength of the shield did indeed explode. The Magicians were initially surprised, but resumed to transferring after hearing Kaiser’s yells of “Send it, use all your power, quick~~” echoing within the base...

The Magicians held back their tears, and continued to transfer magic into the Maxun despite the sounds of explosions and presence of fires around them. The Knights, on the other hand, were trying to hold back themselves from trying to escape, seeing how the base looked like it would implode at any given moment, and held their positions. Of course, some of them murmured prayers to their deities.

*'It's almost over, just a bit more.'* Kaiser's face was pale, and he grabbed the mic to the broadcaster system tightly, with his eyes firmly fixed on the screens, it started to filled with the cracking shield and shrinking ray. The two seemed to be in a match of endurance; whichever one to disappear first, would be the loser.

*'We won't lose!'* Kaiser held his fist tightly.

The protective shield made even more cracking noise. *'Hold on, just a bit more.'*

Suddenly, an entire piece of the protective shield cracked, and disappeared completely. The black ray in that region poured straight through, landing directly on the outer hull of the base. The sounds of painful moans could be heard from the base. Though the ceiling of the base had not been completely breached, but there were countless cracks. The cracks extended and widened throughout the entire base, and the expansion of the cracks were accompanied by screams of fear.

The Knights organized their thoughts, trying hard not to show any signs of fear.

Kaiser put his hands together, still staring at the shield and the black ray... *'Just a bit more! A bit more would do. The ray is almost gone!'*

In that moment, after a loud noise, the protective shield was now completely gone. However, the black ray had not completely dissipated. Without the protective shield stopping it, this black destructive ray shot into the base...

"Crap!" Kaiser yelled loudly, "Find cover!"

It was as though the world was ending. Loud collapsing noises came from everywhere in the base. The rocks and metals that were once a part of the building were now falling. The Knights had to dodge every which way. Some of them couldn't even dodge it, so they had to use their Auras to stop them.

Despite being a dozen or so seconds long, the pain of enduring through such explosions seemed like an eternity to the people inside. After the explosions stopped, everyone came out staring at one another from the places where they had been hiding.

In the command room, Kaiser peeked out his head from underneath the table. After observing his surroundings and seeing there were no more objects flying around, he finally climbed out. After looking around, quite a few of the monitors had broken, but there were still a dozen or so of them that continued functioning. He murmured, almost unbelievably, "We... survived! The base is... still not completely destroyed!"

Everyone froze as they listened to Kaiser's broadcast. When they realized they were still alive, they began cheering, to the point of hugging one another!

"What are you so happy about?! Our shield is gone! And there are still three thousand Knights outside watching all this." Kaiser snapped, then proceed to rub salt in everyone's wounds.

Daylight pushed open the door of the command room. Kaiser looked at Daylight with confusion, unsure of what he wanted to do. Daylight pointed at himself, then at the broadcaster, with a warm and determined smile on his face. Naturally, Kaiser took a step back to let Daylight use the broadcaster.

"Honorable Knights," Daylight spoke with the firm tone he always had.

"We have been staying in the shield for a while now, letting others protect us, but this isn't what Knights should do."

"The duties of a Knight is not to hide behind others. The true Knights are the barricade to our enemies. Using our bodies to stop them, and our weapons to maintain justice. We are—" Daylight closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and this anticipation went into the heart of every Knight.

His eyes suddenly opened, and his golden eyes were full of spirits. Daylight said with a deep voice, "KNIGHTS!"

"Knight", this word echoed encouragement into the heart of every Knight.

Kaiser cracked a smile. He had never heard Daylight talk like this. He also knew, Daylight would never say things pleasant only to the ear. All he did was say his true beliefs. Therefore, it seemed far more convincing.

Kaiser grabbed ahold of the broadcaster, then said unreservedly, "All right, all Magicians, now we have Knights before us, it would be unreasonable for us to be lazy! Go find your Knight team mate and hold your stations. Better be smart about it, a hard fight is about to begin!"

Daylight looked at Kaiser, then asked, "Kaiser, which side will you be fighting on?"



Kaiser shrugged, "Right here. Since the Dragon Emperor asked Miluo to send us such a huge gift, we can't possibly not return an equally big one!"

Daylight looked at Kaiser, waiting for his explanation.

"I plan on using a large scale Magic to deal with the Lesser-Dragons. They stand closely together, and the Black Dragon King probably also doesn't have the power to command them now and avoid danger. A few spells should be enough to take out 70-80 percent of them." Kaiser showed a sinister smile.

Daylight nodded, and said, "I'll protect you. Now that we don't have a protective shield, I'm worried someone might charge in here."

Kaiser grunted, and didn't say anything to thank him. He knew he didn't need to thank him. As a companion and Knight, Daylight would undoubtedly keep him out of harm's way.

The three thousand Dragon Emperor's Knight charged. On the side of Aklan, they were grouped into teams of two Magicians and one Knight, spread out across the base for defense. After being taught by Daylight's lectures, every Knight straightened their backs, using their Aura and body to protect the physically weak Magicians behind them.

Neither the horrific scene of three thousand Knights charging up nor the fact that they were outnumbered six to one seem to phase these Knights to hold off the first wave of attack. Compared to the confusion the Dragon Emperor's Knights were facing, unsure of why they were fighting, the Aklan Knights were fully determined. They were Knights trained by Gladiolus, who never hid anything from them, including the danger of their mission. Those who were unwilling to come were allowed to be put under an amnesia spell and then leave.

Compared to the attacking Knights who were simply obeying the Dragon Emperor's orders without reason, the Aklan Knights knew full well they were protecting Aklan, their country.

Two different attitudes resulted in the two atmospheres being completely different. Even the Dragon Empire's Knights admired the burning flames in their enemies' eyes.

The Knights were responsible for holding off the attack, and the Magicians would obviously not sit still. When the Knights stop the attack, the Magicians had their spells prepared. Standing on either side of the Knight, the two Magicians would cooperate with one another with their spells: one of them would cast ice bolts with high piercing property, forcing the Knights to use their swords to cut the countless

ice bolts, while the other Magician would use a lightning spell, filling the air and the ice bolts with electricity so that when the Knights block or knock them away, they would be shocked to the point of almost dropping their swords.

Suddenly, there was a loud explosion coming from behind them. The Knights who had the chance to turn their heads did, but the scene froze them. The images going into their eyes looked like those who has seen at the end of the world. A fissure was on the ground, and out of it came countless flames. The Lesser-Dragons had no power to defend themselves. They either fell into the fissure, or caught by the fire and ended up being in a fireball. They roared in pain and bashed their heads against every which way, and the number of Lesser-Dragons caught on fire were countless. In that instant, the whole place looked like it was hell.

“Doomsday Flames, one of my crazy grandfather’s inventions.”

Kaiser gave out an evil laugh from within the secret base.

“The Dragon Emperor’s Knights are next, and I have just the move for them.” Cruelty flashed across Kaiser’s eyes.

“Kaiser?!”

Seeing what happened with the Lesser-Dragons, Daylight already felt condolences for the Lesser-Dragons. Now that he heard Kaiser planned to use this move on the Knights, he was extremely shocked.

“Stop nagging! Shut your mouth if you don’t want to lose.” Kaiser roared, interrupting Daylight’s attempt to stop him. He had spent quite a while to make up his mind to use this move, and this was the only move that could leave them victorious, so he had to use it no matter what, even if it means his hands would be stained with blood... He didn’t care. War was always going to result in blood!

Daylight paused, but he still felt it wasn’t right. But, as Kaiser had said, if he could use large-scale Magic like he did before, they would decrease the number of enemies drastically. However... they were Knights, too, but simply under the Dragon Emperor’s orders to attack their enemies. Would they really deserve to die because of it?

Kaiser closed his eyes. Such a large-scale Magic was very taxing, and if it fails, he might not have enough power to cast it again. In fact, the previous Doomsday Flames had already cost him significant mana, and it would affect the power of the spell he was about to cast.

If that were the case, why would he cast a Doomsday Flames, just to take out of the relatively harmless Lesser-Dragons?

Kaiser shook his head, trying to shake away any thoughts of weakness, and concentrated his thoughts on Magic. He began to murmur Magic incantations, but in his mind, countless images of Magic tearing apart a human body flew across; blood, tissues... *'Damn! Calm down, if you don't concentrate on casting the Magic, then the people getting destroyed won't be the enemies, but instead our own.'*

"Kaiser..."

Seeing Kaiser's obvious restlessness, Daylight frowned and didn't know what he should do. As a companion, he didn't wish to see Kaiser's bloodlust side. He believed Kaiser did not want to kill any more than he did, but they had no choice.

Daylight looked towards the screen, at the images of everyone killing one another, and he could vaguely tell neither side wanted to kill one another; especially the Dragon Empire Knights, who didn't even know why they were fighting, so they did not really want to kill.

*'Why? Everyone obviously did not want to kill one another, so why force themselves to kill?'*

*'Is there any way to avoid such meaningless war?'*

Daylight stared at the screen, trying to find any possibility to avoid killing. Suddenly, a group of small black dots appeared in the sky on the monitor, and they were gradually becoming bigger — obviously something flying towards them. Daylight thought it was strange, and concentrated on watching them...

"That's...?"

Daylight's jaws dropped. In the lead of those dots, he saw someone he never thought he would see!

*'Is that him? Is that him?'* Daylight practically had his face against the monitor. Suddenly, the screen changed, and a pair of zoomed-in silver eyes startled Daylight, which made him jump back a few steps before he actually focused his eyes on this person.

"Uhm... I saw you were looking at this screen, so I zoomed in." The Knights controlling the monitor quickly explained. He didn't think Daylight would be so surprised.

"No... No! It's fine, I mean, thank you for zooming in!"

Daylight was so excited he could not even speak the proper words. It was him, he was here!

Right, he still had to stop Kaiser. Daylight panicked, and he quickly slapped his hand towards the back of Kaiser's head.

Bam!

"Do you want to die..."

Kaiser was glued face-first onto the floor, and a dull voice could be heard from the floor.

"No! Kaiser, look! Look!" Daylight was so happy that he did not care what Kaiser said. He grabbed onto Kaiser's collar, and pulled him up like a little kitten.

Kaiser was now hanging in the air with his feet off the floor. Veins were popped on his forehead. If Daylight had not provided an explanation for his actions, Kaiser might have very well throw the incomplete spell towards Daylight's head!

However, there was no need for Daylight to explain, because the explanation already appeared on the screen.

"Liola!" Kaiser blurted.

## **Chapter 7 : The Gamble**

"Stop! All of you!"

Liola stood on top of Baolilong's back, and projected his voice with his Ki. He bit his lip. A place like this without any signs of smiles was not something he wanted to see.

However, everyone was in the heat of battle, so they would never acknowledge a random person's roar. The battle field was still in chaos, and no one stopped.

Seeing this, Liola frowned, and said once again with a deep voice, "I am the Dragon Empire's successor, Silver Moon. All Dragon Empire's Knights heed my orders, stop at once."

*'His Highness, the successor?'*

Now, the Dragon Empire Knights couldn't ignore this order. The Knights who weren't as occupied turned around to look, and the first thing they saw was the snow-white Sacred White Dragon. The only person alive in this world with a Sacred White Dragon mount was none other than the successor.

The Dragon Empire Knights all yelled in shock, "It's the Sacred White Dragon." Some Knights even recognized the successor from his looks, and screamed, "It really is the successor!"

The Dragon Empire's Knights quickly obeyed the order to stop, and the Aklan Knights were more than happy to let them leave. Neither side had the lust for battle, and it was stopped quickly.

"Continue fighting, no one is allowed to stop!"

A different voice could be heard. Everyone was shocked, and looked towards the source of this voice. They were amazed to find the Dragon Emperor himself, dressed in his purple robe! The Dragon Emperor looked furious, and his eyes when he looked at Liola was practically filled with animosity.

The Knights looked towards the successor, then back at the Dragon Emperor. They gave completely opposing orders, and the Knights had no idea what to do. Should they fight, or not?

"I am the Dragon Emperor, now all Knights, obey my orders, attack that base!"

The Dragon Emperor yelled angrily, and the sound of it made the Knights panic. They hurried to pick up their weapons, planning on obeying order and attack...

"No!" Liola yelled loudly.

The Knights picked up the weapons, but they couldn't decide whether they should continue to attack. All they could do was stand helplessly as they watched their bosses giving opposite orders.

The Dragon Emperor knew if this continued, the fight would be over. He was silent for a while, and then asked with a rigid tone, "Child, do you really plan on going against your father."

Liola raised his head, and looked at the Dragon Emperor with determined eyes, "Yes! I will never allow this meaningless war to continue."

"Meaningless?" The Dragon Emperor was suddenly infuriated, "You dare to say this war is meaningless? This war is for the honor of our Dragon Empire! As a Royalty of

the Empire, how dare you call it meaningless! You do not have the slightest honor in your heart! You are not worthy to be a successor, and I hereby revoke your title as the successor!"

Liola was silent. He turned his head to look at Feir next to him, whom then nodded towards him with a pair of determined and supportive eyes.

"I will not accept your revocation." Liola replied calmly.

Hearing this, the Dragon Emperor's expression changed drastically, but quickly calmed down. His elegant face was now expressionless, "Then, what do you want?"

"I..." Liola's brows tightened, "... want to be the Dragon Emperor!"

(At this moment, within the base, Kaiser's jaws dropped to his chest!)

Usurpation! The Dragon Emperor Knights finally understood what the situation was, and they began to relax... Usurpation was so common in the Dragon Empire that the Knights didn't feel as worried.

"I see." The Dragon Empire smiled lightly, "But what do you plan on using to take away my throne? My dear child, every power you have is given by me, and I can take it all back in one sentence. Do you really plan on taking on the entire Empire by yourself?"

"That's not the case. Everyone behind me all swore loyalty to Silver Moon." Feir smiled as he reminded the Dragon Emperor not to mistake these Knights as people who accidentally stood on the wrong side.

The Dragon Emperor's purple eyes glanced at the Knights behind Liola, and replied without care, "Just a couple hundred Knights."

"And me." Feir added calmly.

"You?" The Dragon Emperor narrowed his eyes, and revealed a disdainful smile, "You're just one Silver Knight."

"I am not loyal to Silver Moon like a Knight would be." Feir clarified, "I am the son of the Commerce Alliance Red Commander, and I am also the future leader of the Commerce Alliance. With that identity, I am supporting Silver Moon as the Dragon Emperor."

"And us!" Kaiser's voice could suddenly be heard. He turned the broadcaster to its limit and yelled with his loud voice. It did indeed caught everyone's attention... as well as causing their ears to ring.

"We, representing Aklan's prime minister... 's son Meinan, we definitely support Li... Silver Moon as the Dragon Emperor."

The situation suddenly changed. The support for Liola suddenly expanded: there was Commerce Alliance, Aklan Republic, and even the Dragon Empire itself had two hundred Knights defecting to him.

"Great! Then you take your power, and charge into the palace. Create the blood path of your kingdom!" The Dragon Emperor saw everything was now a fact. Without any other choice, he roared angrily.

"No!" Liola suddenly yelled loudly, "I don't want war."

"You don't want war?" The Dragon Emperor smiled cruelly, "Child, you are already in a war."

"There must be some way to avoid killing." Liola answered calmly, and asked, "You don't wish to lose your Dragon Empire Knights over this usurpation, do you?"

The Heart of Dragon Emperor thought quickly. Indeed, to fulfill his plan of conquering the world, losing his Knights was the last thing he wanted to see. In the future, he still had to rely on these Knights to win him the world. Besides, Liola's body was still the best candidate for him, and he did not want to see any mishaps in the fight.

"Let's have a gamble." Liola said calmly.

The Dragon Emperor asked with confusion, "A bet?"

"Yes, a bet, a gamble, and the wager is the throne to the Dragon Emperor." Liola explained lightly.

The Dragon Emperor burst into laughter. This was far too ridiculous; he had never imagine someone would suggest such a bet. He asked curiously, "What is the bet for?"

"As long as we don't have a war, it's up to you." Liola answered without hesitation.

(Crack! Kaiser's jaw dropped from his chest to his hips.)

"Are you sure?" Seeing Liola nod, the Dragon Emperor smiled, "If you win, I'll give you the throne to the Dragon Emperor, but if I win, what's in it for me?"

Liola remained silent for a while, and answered, "I'll eat the Heart of the Dragon Emperor." He said it calmly, as though the Heart was just another heart of a roasted pig.

(Bang! Kaiser's jaw was now on the ground.)

"Good, good. I'll bet with you!" The Dragon Emperor's desire to play seemed to have piqued. He was interested in such a bet, and besides, he had the power to decide the game's rules. To him, this was greatly advantageous.

"This bet would be too boring if it's just you and me." The Dragon Emperor smiled, "Why don't you bring your four other companions? Mizerui told me, you guys are known as the Aklan Troublemaking Squad?" *'Just let me catch you all in one swoop. When your companions cease to exist, it would be easy for the Heart to take your body.'*

Liola nodded.

"Since you are acting so free and easy, I have nothing else to say. All Knights, withdraw your weapons, and go back to defend the Aklan capital!"

The Dragon Emperor gave out the order, and the Knights secretly glanced at the successor. Seeing he did not say anything contrary, they calmly sheathed their weapons and quickly flew away from the secret base. Everyone had already begun guessing; would the Dragon Empire go into another dynasty, or would the successor fail miserably?

"As for the game's rules, let me have some time to think about it. After all, this is a true gamble that will determine the fate of a country. Haha... hahahaha!"

The Dragon Emperor acted as though victory was security in his grasp, and began to laugh. A Magic door also opened at this time. He laughed as he stepped into Idojin's door. At the same time, Mizerui, who was observing all this from above, also disappeared. The Black Dragon King Miluo, who had used his last move, also completely disappeared.

Liola had been standing still quietly, until the Magic door slowly dissipated.

"How could you think of something so ridiculous?" Feir felt weak in his limbs, "And you are letting the Dragon Emperor make all the rules. You're practically giving him victory on a silver platter..."



At this time, Kaiser also charged out of the base angrily. Before he even arrived, his loud voice arrived first.

"You idiot!" Kaiser flew next to Baolilong, while dragging Daylight, who didn't know how to fly and temporarily had no mount.

"Kaiser." Liola smiled lightly, "Long time no see."

"Long time no see, my ass! You're the one who didn't want to see me, not me!" Kaiser snappily roared, "Look, making such~~ huge trouble the moment we meet, I actually thought you were still Silver Moon! But the moment I saw how idiotic the bet you made with the Dragon Emperor, I knew you were none other than Liola!"

Hearing what Kaiser said, Liola answered with hesitation, "I am Silver Moon, and I'm also Liola."

"What are you talking about?" Kaiser asked with confusion.

Liola froze, unsure of how to explain his current situation.

"Hello, brother Feir." Hanging in the air, Daylight smiled and greeted Feir.

Feir nodded, but couldn't help but smile, "Daylight, you and Kaiser going by yourselves made Purity and Meinan furious. You might want to be careful the next time you see them. The last I spoke to her, Purity sounded like she wanted to skin you limb to limb."

"Ah..." Daylight smiled bitterly, "Then I better go apologize."

Feir had an idea, "Buy Purity the Aklan specialty, roasted chestnuts. I promise she will be half as angry. It's one of her favorite foods. Last time she got mad at me, I bought her some, but Kaiser ended up eating them. She was so angry that she secretly dumped salt into Kaiser's food, but Kaiser still swallowed it all..."

"Right, I was wondering why the food seemed quite seasoned back then, but after a while, they were bland as hell again." Kaiser couldn't stop himself from talking.

*'Did you grow up eating salt as if it were rice...'* Feir thought to himself. He saw Purity dumping a "handful" of salt into the food.

"Speaking of Aklan's specialty, roasted chestnut," Kaiser pouted, then said, "There are quite a bit of those things in this secret base... How about we prepare some tea, have a few pieces of roasted chestnut, and share what we've been doing?"

Everyone's eyes converged onto Liola. Being stared by everyone, he had no choice but agree, "Mm."

\* \* \*

Though the metal pieces and cement were once a part of the building, they were now trash littered throughout the ground. Nevertheless, after organizing such ruins, everyone sat down leisurely to enjoy their afternoon tea. It might have been a bit grand to have a few thousand people having afternoon tea together, but something small like that can be ignored for now.

After sipping the fragrant tea, Kaiser grabbed a handful of roasted chestnut, then happily enjoyed his afternoon tea time...

"That's Baolilong's!" Baolilong jumped, pounced onto Kaiser, trying to get "its" roasted chestnuts back.

Kaiser hurriedly stuffed all the food into his mouth, but he was still able to say, "It's not like your name is written on it."

Unfortunately, he had forgotten Baolilong was no longer the little child who barely reached his waist, but it was now a young adult reaching up to his chin. Baolilong angrily grabbed ahold of both Kaiser cheeks, and pulled to the sides.

"Ow, OWW! Stinky Liola, tell your child to let go!" Kaiser tried desperately to pull his face back, but Baolilong's strength wasn't like that of a child anymore. He felt like the skin on his face was about to be pulled off, but he still couldn't get his face back.

"Baolilong, don't tear Kaiser's face off." Liola glanced casually at the battle between the human and the Dragon, and said. He then returned his focus onto the secret base. It had sustained attacks from three thousand Knights for days, including the destructive last move from the Black Dragon King, but it was still standing. This was almost incredible, and he could see how much effort Qiusi had actually put into this place.

"Qiusi." Liola suddenly remembered Qiusi was injured by him, and was still unconscious.

Hearing Liola speak out this name, Kaiser grabbed another handful of snacks and stuffed it into Baolilong's mouth, finally breaking free of this little guy's "face-pulling Kung Fu". He explained to Liola, "He's in the Commerce Alliance. I think you should probably heal him before your gamble."

Liola answered with, "Mm."

Kaiser frowned, and said without holding back, "You, there's something strange with you, but at the same time it's not so strange. It's kind of like Baolilong's... change when it grew up. But how old are you exactly? How could you have 'grown up' in such a short time? Hey! Tell me what happened, otherwise I might die from being too curious!"

Liola pressed his lips tightly together, and waited a long while to say, "Brother Mocha was killed by me."

Kaiser was originally drinking tea peacefully as he waited for Liola's explanation, but the moment he heard it, all the tea in his mouth was "gifted" to Daylight, who was sitting on the opposite side. Daylight also froze, and it wasn't until the tea had dripped from his hair onto the table, did he start to try and comfort him in a worried manner, "Liola, don't be sad, you didn't do it on purpose. Don't blame yourself because of it."

"He hasn't even said anything!" Kaiser snapped and interrupted him, then both of them laid their eyes on Liola.

"That day, Lancelot and Blood Wolf pulled me out with Magic. They wanted to rescue me, but back then I..." Liola took a deep breath before he could continue, "... was controlled by the Dragon Emperor."

"I fought with them. In the end, I captured Lanski to be the hostage, threatening them to let me go." Liola stopped, as though he didn't know how to continue.

"And then?" Kaiser asked with confusion, "You didn't talk about Mocha? Didn't he die that day?"

Liola looked at Kaiser with depressed eyes, "He did die that day. Lanski, she... no, I should say, I wanted to kill her, but brother Mocha suddenly appeared, and blocked the knife with his body."

"Wait!" Kaiser yelled, "You skipped quite a bit. Why would you want to kill Lanski?"

Liola was quiet for a long time. Kaiser and Daylight continued to glance at one another, not sure what to do, until Liola finally spoke without context, "She didn't want to call me Silver Moon, so I got mad."

"Huh?" Kaiser and Daylight both responded reflexively.

"Why would you be mad if she didn't want to call you Silver Moon?" Kaiser frowned.

"I..." Liola seemed a bit timid. He wasn't sure if he dared to tell them he wasn't simply "Liola", and instead he was partially "Silver Moon".

"What!" Kaiser glanced at him, "What are you afraid of? Do you think we haven't made enough trouble already? Let me tell you, there is nothing now that I, Kaiser, can't accept! Even if you tell me you and the world would self-destruct tomorrow, I wouldn't be surprised!"

Liola couldn't help but burst into laughter, and the nervousness he felt was now completely gone.

"Damn! Damn! You're laughing! You actually laughed! I'm a goner. You're definitely going to self-destruct tomorrow, and then kill me along with that explosion." Kaiser began to bawl, grabbed more snacks, and started eating like a madman (Baolilong roared angrily, "That's Baolilong's!"). Even as he ate, he spoke with crumbs falling out of his mouth, "Eat quickly, at least we won't die as hungry men."

"I'm not going to self-destruct." Liola smiled as he shook his head.

"Then tell me, what exactly could be so serious that you would be afraid to tell us?"

"I'm not just Liola; I'm also Silver Moon." Liola spoke quickly, then realized he actually was able to say it.

Kaiser and Daylight both paused, unsure of what Liola meant. All they knew was the person in front of them was indeed slightly different from the Liola before.

"Before, Silver Moon... was someone Liola created to escape pain." Liola finished saying, then quickly glanced at the two to see if they understood.

Daylight still had a confused expression on his face, but Kaiser was now so deep in thought that his whole face wrinkled, "I see, is it because Gle's training was too harsh, and Liola couldn't handle it, so you created a second personality: a cold, emotionless Silver Moon, in order to survive the crazy training Gle gave you... If that's the case, we have to actually thank Silver Moon. Otherwise, perhaps Liola couldn't even sustain those training and already kicked the bucket."

"So that's how it is. I understand how Silver Moon was born now. I might have misunderstood him; I used to think his emotionless was actually wrong." Daylight shook his head forcefully.

Liola stared at his two companions in shock. Why did they seem... not very surprised?

"All right, don't look at me with those surprised eyes. I'm more surprised than you are." Kaiser waved his hand, and said, perplexed, "Before, even if penguins started to rain out of the sky, you wouldn't even blink; but now, you are indeed different. It's strange, though, why would a stone-faced Liola combined with an ice cube Silver Moon, result in a guy who knows how to smile and be surprised?"

"Speaking of that, maybe you should change your name," Kaiser crossed his arms and thought, "Which do you think is better, Silverola, or Liomoon?"

Liola smiled bitterly and answered, "They both sound bad, just call me Liola."

Kaiser looked at Liola from the corner of his eyes, "Yo! You actually can tell if a name sounds bad. That's some improvement. You really are all 'grown up'."

Liola smiled lightly. It looked like he did underestimate his companions ability to accept him.

"Right, so why do you want to be the Dragon Emperor? Weren't you really repulsive to that idea before?" Kaiser suddenly remembered. It was this matter that made his jaws drop to his chest.

Liola described everything happened during his stay in the small city to the south.

After hearing it, Daylight was so emotional that he yelled uncontrollably, "That's great. To fill the world with smiles, this wish is just too great. Liola, I swear I will help you become the Dragon Emperor."

Kaiser snappily rolled his eyes at Daylight, "It's not that simple. Don't forget Liola promised the Dragon Emperor a damn bet! And we don't even know what the bet is all about."

"Speaking of the gamble..." Kaiser turned around and narrowed his eyes towards Liola, "You used to at least show a bit of self blame on your face, and then say you're sorry, followed by telling us you would go resolve everything by yourself... Why is it that when Dragon Emperor told you to take us with you, you agreed rather easily?"

"Because..." Liola showed a warm smile, "No matter what I do, you all will go with me."

After Daylight burst into laughter, he nodded. Kaiser, on the other hand, scratched his face helplessly, "Whatever, at least it's better than you running away by yourself, and then we would have to waste the effort to find you and catch up."

"It's getting late, sleep early." Kaiser stood up, putting his hands behind his head, planning on going back to his room to sleep, "There will be a lot of things we need to do starting from tomorrow; we need to go wake Qiusi, go tell Purity and Meinan about the bet... Right, where did Barbalis and Gladiolus go? They said they needed to take care of some business, but now they're nowhere to be found. *Sigh*, I have to find a way to ascertain whether they're still alive before the gamble. I don't want to see my sister becoming a widow before she's even married..."

"Kaiser, Daylight," Liola called out to them both. After waiting for them to turn around, he said with a smile, "Thank you, both of you."

Daylight smiled and nodded, but Kaiser didn't turn around; instead he murmured, "This is far more pleasing to the ear than 'sorry'..."

## **Chapter 8 : Eve of the Gamble**

In order to settle in the two hundred Knights who swore their loyalty to him, prepare for the bet at the same time, Liola was very busy along with Kaiser and Daylight. Other than resolving conflicts between the Knights from both sides, he also did as Kaiser asked: to spread the news of the bet as much as possible.

"Make it known to the whole world, and the Dragon Emperor wouldn't dare to suggest something unfair."

Kaiser was confident, and he was then busy with... pawning tasks off to others.

"Hey! Feir, the future leader, the propaganda in the Commerce Alliance is yours."

"Hey! Those of you loyal to Liola... as in that Silver Moon successor, go and tell your brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, and even your neighbors who sells noodles about this bet... What? How did I know about your neighbor selling noodles? Duh, I'm speaking to two hundred Knights; one of you is bound to live near one, right?"

"Daylight-brand communication Maxun, please come to Kaiser, I need to contact Meinan!"

*[T/N: Kaiser is treating Daylight like a phone to talk to Flames.]*

“What’s up?” Daylight rushed over with enough sandbags to pile up to a sizeable small mountain.

“Tell Meinan to bring Qiusi over.”

“I’ve already told him.” Daylight was shocked, “They will probably arrive today.”

Kaiser was shocked, “What? Then I better be emotionally prepared!”

“Why would you need to be emotionally prepared?” Daylight asked, confused.

“Oh, right, I meant was to tell Liola to be emotionally prepared.” Kaiser then dashed off.

\* \* \*

Kaiser walked leisurely as he looked for Liola. Probably because he didn’t spend much effort, it took him all morning to find Liola on top of a small hill not far from the base.

“So you’re slacking off here, you bum.” Kaiser patted Liola’s back heavily.

Liola turned his head to look at Kaiser with a helpless expression on his face. Kaiser frowned and asked, “What’s wrong with you? Why do you look so down?”

Liola glanced at Kaiser, then handed over a piece of paper from his hand.

“Gamble invitation letter?” Kaiser began to murmur. He opened the invitation, and began to read the details inside:

*My child, sorry for making you wait. As your father, I’ve already decided the rules of the gamble. It will be divided into three stages: the battles of Magics, Knights, and Dragons. If you and your companions pass all three stages, the throne to the Dragon Emperor is yours.*

*Signed,  
Father.*

“The battle of Dragons, is it between Miluo and Baolilong?”

Kaiser frowned. How could this fight be fought? They’re not even on the same level. Even though Sacred White Dragons reigned supreme among Dragons, Miluo is a strong and matured Dragon, while Baolilong is just an non-matured young Dragon. They were bound to lose.

"I don't want to make Baolilong fight with Miluo. They are father and son." Liola's tone of voice was clearly sad.

*'Did this guy forget he and the Dragon Emperor are also father and son?'* Kaiser scratched the face, but he suddenly realized, could it be because he has to fight with his father, and therefore he didn't want to see the same happening to Baolilong?

Kaiser casually sat down on the grass on the hill. With his hands behind his head, he lay down and asked lazily, "If your father is still living in that body, would you want to rescue him?"

Liola frowned and answered, "I would, for Mocha's sake."

Kaiser rolled his eyes, *'Yes would've sufficed, why keep blabbing about it?'*

"If you want to rescue your father, then why can't Baolilong go save its father?"

Liola paused, then answered, "Mm, it should go rescue Miluo."

"Well, this was easily resolved." Kaiser stretched, and sat up.

"Kaiser, can you promise me, if your lives are threatened, you would take everyone else and escape?"

Kaiser turned, stared at Liola. He then said slowly, word for word, "I will take 'everyone' and run. Did you hear me? EVERYONE!"

Liola smiled slightly, "I heard."

Kaiser grunted "Ah", and pointed at the few small dots far away, "I almost forgot! I'm here to tell you that Meinan and others are about arrive here, and you should be prepared..."

Hearing this, Liola smiled bitterly. Kaiser sure gave him a long time to prepare for it; all ten seconds.

Liola's estimate was quite accurate. After ten seconds, Purity's Mecha, the unicorn, Blackie, and Little Fireball all landed from the air. The moment Flames landed, Meinan could no longer wait: he grabbed his father, and ran straight towards Liola.

Being the physically weak Magician that he was, Meinan was already having trouble catching his breath after holding his father on the entire trip. He said intermittently, "Li, Liola... hurry and save Qiusi."



Liola didn't speak a word. He immediately put his hand on Qiusi's chest, and withdrew all the destructive Ki inside Qiusi's body. He then released the seal Daylight used to put Qiusi into a pseudo death state. When he pulled his hand away, Qiusi's eyes twitched slightly, then... he turned and continued to sleep.

"Is... is that it?" Meinan panicked, "Why is my father still not awake? Did it fail?"

Before Liola had a chance to respond, Qiusi began to talk in his sleep, "Hmm! Such a good baby, let papa sleep a bit more."

"Sleep, your ass!" Meinan punched his father's forehead heavily to give him a wake up call.

\* \* \*

"So, Liola, you're finally awake; this is a cause for celebration." Qiusi earnestly congratulated Liola, but the huge bandage on his forehead made his earnest face rather unconvincing.

"Thank you for forgiving me, Prime Minister Qiusi." Liola sincerely thanked him.

"Don't put it like that. You didn't mean to harm me back then, and this finally broke the ice between me and Meinan. So it was quite a fortune among misfortunes! Hahaha." Remembering the time Meinan called him father worriedly, Qiusi was so happy that he couldn't close his mouth from laughing even if he wanted to.

"However, I didn't think you youngsters could do it so well."

Kaiser and Daylight both said awkwardly, "Not that well. The base is basically half destroyed."

"Oh." Qiusi smiled lightly, "Being able to preserve the base while facing Mizerui, Miluo, and three thousand Knights is already quite 'well'."

"But, Liola, since I'm awake, can't you consider canceling the bet?" Qiusi stared at Liola, "Since you have the support of Commerce Alliance, Aklan Republic, and the Prince and Princess, plus the Paladin and the Dark Knight..."

"I don't support him!" Cappuccino interrupted Qiusi coldly.

Everyone looked towards Cappuccino, and they could hardly believe Cappuccino would speak out against it. In fact, it wasn't until now that everyone realized, despite Cappuccino's earlier laughing manner, he had not smiled in quite a while.

Blood Wolf, on the other hand, did not seem surprised; instead, all he did was raise his eyebrows.

“Third brother,” Lanski asked hesitantly, “Why would you oppose Liola becoming the Dragon Emperor?”

Cappuccino’s face was cold, but his tone was colder, “Nobody here cared about Mocha, other than me! But even if I’m alone, I will oppose him to the end alone. I-I will never support a person who killed Mocha, then carelessly walk around smiling!”

Lanski was shocked. She didn’t think it was because of Mocha. She tried to explain, “Third brother, at the time, Liola didn’t have a choice...”

Cappuccino interrupted with a loud shout, “Shut up! Shut up! Even you, my sister, did you really care about eldest brother? Do you know, these years, how much effort eldest brother had to put in to secretly protect us? I didn’t even get to tell him thanks before he... he... died like this...” Cappuccino’s voice choked towards the end.

He turned, without looking at anyone, and without any tears falling from his eyes. He straightened his back, trying to maintain his last bit of dignity.

“That’s because brother Mocha wants me to live happily!”

Liola shouted, and Cappuccino stood still.

“I am deeply in grief, but brother Mocha wouldn’t even give me the chance to be sad. He wants me to be happy, he wants me to smile...” Liola lowered his head, “But, every time I think about brother Mocha, I want to cry... but he demands that I smile! That’s why I try not to think about him. Even if I do, I think about the warmth he gave me when he hugged. A hug I will never get to experience again because of his death...”

Two streams of tears rolled down from Liola’s silver eyes. He said firmly, “Even if you don’t believe me, I will still say it; you’re wrong! You are not the only one present who cared about brother Mocha! I really cared about him, even if I hadn’t spent much time with him.”

Cappuccino stood still without turning around.

“Idiot!” He yelled loudly.

Liola paused, then raised his head in confusion. Who knew that the moment he did so, a huge fist landed on his forehead, making him lower his head again. He was stupefied as he touched the bump on his forehead, not sure what had happened.

"You really think when Mocha told you to be happy meant you can't even be sad? Mocha only... only hopes you would live like a person, and truly live, instead of being a walking corpse. But, as the eldest brother, he was always afraid you might blame yourself for a long time after killing him, so he told you to be happy... who knew you would misunderstand it?" Cappuccino sounded a bit helpless.

"However... I don't have the right to blame you."

With his head lowered, Liola suddenly found the ground he was staring at had been stepped on. He instinctively raised his head, only to find Cappuccino smiling at him. Cappuccino put his hands onto Liola's head, and rubbed it at will, making Liola's usually ordered hair turn into a bird's nest.

"Sorry! Brother, I am just this stupid, I couldn't tell you were holding back your sadness. Hmm, if you..." Cappuccino's face suddenly turned uneasy, and he said awkwardly, "If you don't care that I'm not as smart as Mocha, or blaming you for not feeling bad, you can treat me like your brother. I mean, a brother like Mocha was to you..."

Liola couldn't help but laugh, "You already are my brother..."

"Ah..." Cappuccino scratched his head, "I guess you are right..."

"Oh, right!" Cappuccino suddenly grabbed a few necklaces out of his collar, and one of them was the Dragon Cross Necklace. He handed the necklace over, "Here, your necklace. I think you might find it useful."

Liola received the necklace, then put it around his neck, "Thank you."

Cappuccino nodded, and said, "Right, I also have several identical necklace, let me give you one. Oh and, sister, you take one too."

"Hmm?" Both Liola and Lanski thought it was strange; why would Cappuccino give them necklaces all of a sudden?

Cappuccino took off two necklaces from his neck. They were both shaped the same: an oval locket with delicate Dragons carved on both. One of them was a Black Dragon, and the other was a Blue Dragon.

He twisted both the Black and Blue Dragons, and the locket opened after a click. A picture was inside both lockets; it was one of three men and one woman. The four of them smiled so brightly, and their similar looks made it obvious they were a family.

"Your second brother, Latte, was quite stupid back then. And he didn't like Susanna, so he didn't want to take a picture with them." Cappuccino sounded helpless.

"The blue one, was Susanna's." Cappuccino smiled, and gave the blue necklace in his left hand to Lanski.

Lanski took the locket as though it was the rarest treasure, and she couldn't wait to wear it. She touched the locket in front of her chest, and smiled as she spoke to herself, "This is mother's locket..."

Cappuccino looked warmly at his sister, then turned to his brother, handing him the other necklace.

"This is..." Liola looked at the Black Dragon carving, then looked at Cappuccino with doubt.

"That's right. This one is Mocha's." Cappuccino ascertained Liola's guess.

"Brother." Liola took the necklace, and stared at Mocha in the picture. He was smiling the same way he did "that day". Liola wore the necklace, and he felt as though he was carrying Mocha with him, along with his warmth and his protection.

"I wonder, is having three necklaces a bit too much?" Cappuccino carefully examined his brother's thin neck.

"Three?"

"Yup. You two still don't have a picture." Cappuccino looked towards his sister, and asked like he was interrogating, "When Liola comes back, we'll go take a picture together, and put it in a new locket?"

Lanski paused. She understood what he meant, and nodded her head, "Right, when Liola comes back, let's go take a picture!"

"Remember to come back early." Cappuccino's tone sounded like an older brother telling his younger brother not to stay out playing too late.

Liola nodded heavily, "I will definitely come back early."

"W... wait." Qiusi wiped away the sweat on his forehead, "I seem to remember telling you to cancel this gamble."

"That's not going to work." Siblings of the Dragon family answered unison, glanced at one another, and smiled.

Liola and Lanski both looked at the eldest among them: Cappuccino. He began to explain, "It doesn't matter if the Commerce Alliance and Aklan Republic support Liola or not. To the Dragon Empire's Knights, all that is pointless. To win the throne

of the Dragon Empire, one must obtain the recognition from the Knights. A challenge as honorable as brother's proposal, and even letting the opponent make the rules, is very fitting for winning the hearts of the Knights over. Even if he were to lose, the Knights may still help him usurp the throne. However, if he were to cancel it now, then his actions would be tabooed, and he will never become the King."

"I see, so even if he loses he might get the support of the Knights. If that's the case..."

"He can't lose!" Kaiser interrupted Qiusi, took a deep breath, and said, "Liola promised, if he loses he would swallow the Heart of the Dragon Emperor..."

"What did you say?!" Cappuccino was now suddenly emotional. He grabbed his brother immediately by the shoulder, "How could you promise something like that? Didn't you learn anything from what happened to Caffey?"

"If I didn't promise him that, he would not have accepted this gamble." Liola shook his head.

"Then, there's no reason to gamble, right?" Cappuccino yelled angrily, "We already support you to ascending to the throne. Caffey is already fairly old; if you were just to wait a bit more..."

"Exactly, because Caffey is already old!" Liola said decidedly, "If I won and ascend to the throne, then the Heart will have no use for Caffey any more. Perhaps he would let Caffey go and let him recover his consciousness."

"You... you made this gamble because of father?" Cappuccino was clearly very shocked, "Why? You haven't even seen Caffey."

"I have." Liola said lightly.

Cappuccino frowned; how was that possible? Ever since Susanna's death, Caffey had never made an appearance. After a brief moment of thought, he explained to his brother, "What you saw was not the true Caffey, just an imitation from the Heart of the Dragon Emperor."

"It's here!" Liola pointed at Cappuccino.

"Huh?" Cappuccino also pointed himself in confusion.

"And from brother Mocha."

Cappuccino was now even more confused.

Kaiser finally couldn't stay out of it, so started to explain, "Idiot. What he means is, you are both Caffey's children, and it has already told him how Caffey really was."

Liola said, "Brother Mocha loved father dearly; therefore, I, too, want to see our true father." *'It must be... a person warm like brother Mocha and a person with Cappuccino's smile.'*

"I see... then it's up to you."

Cappuccino couldn't help but raise his head again, but this time, with tears in his eyes. He cursed at himself his earlier idiocy. How could he have thought Liola did not care about Mocha's death? He obviously cared about it more than Cappuccino himself to set up such a gamble. To make the father Mocha loved reappear again.

"Purity, Meinan, are you willing to... if you aren't willing to go with me, it's fine." Liola said sincerely. Especially Meinan, who had just reunited with his father. He must want to spend more time with him.

"Oh! Speaking of which..." Purity glanced at Meinan, who looked back at her, then said, "It seems like we have some scores to settle?"

"I remember there were two certain people who abandoned us and secretly went to rescue Liola-dage." Purity blinked with her innocent eyes, but her tone was enough to send a shiver up Daylight and Kaiser's spines.

"Uh, really?" Kaiser looked even more innocent than her.

Daylight, however, was smiling bitterly, not planning on defending himself.

"You're still pretending!" Purity and Meinan shouted in unison, then began giving them quite a beating. They yelled as they beat them, "Take this! Take that! Let's see who dares to abandon us now!"

A drop of cold sweat ran down Liola's forehead!

Suddenly, someone pulled his hand. After turning around, he saw Jasmine's eyes staring at him. Liola smiled at her, "Long time no see."

"You've changed, a lot." Jasmine said sincerely, "The old you would've never said something like this, nor would you have smiled."

"You don't like the way I am now?" For some reason, Liola started to feel worried.

"I do. You seem more like your child's father." Jasmine smiled playfully, but immediately looked at Baolilong worriedly, "How is this child's personality now?"

“Still like a little child.” Liola waved his hand at Baolilong, and called, “Baolilong, come here, Jasmine wants to see you.”

Baolilong was still “catching up” with Flames and Little Fireball, but the moment it heard papa calling for it, it immediately ran over. Then, forgetting it was no longer a little child, it began climbing up Liola’s leg like it used to and it held onto Liola without letting go.

“Jasmine.” Liola gestured towards Jasmine, who was a bit worried that Baolilong might have forgotten her.

Baolilong yelled loudly, “Jasmine.”

It then pounced towards Jasmine, almost sending Jasmine flying towards the ground. Luckily, Liola caught her in time, so she didn’t end up on the floor. Nevertheless, even if she fell, Jasmine probably wouldn’t have minded. She was now entrenched in the happiness of Baolilong remembering her, and Baolilong’s personality was as cute as before.

“Jasmine, Baolilong wants meat!” Baolilong yelled desperately.

Jasmine smiled happy and said okay, but Liola was frowning. He shouted at Baolilong, telling it not to ask for meat the moment it sees someone. On the side, Purity and Meinan were working together to “fix up” Daylight and Kaiser. Daylight was basically letting them beat him without actually feeling anything. Kaiser, on the other hand, was moaning loudly in pain.

A black wolf was sneakily pacing between Flames and Lancelot’s unicorn, as though it couldn’t make up its mind.

Blood Wolf said in frustration, “I’ve already told that stupid wolf hundreds of times that your unicorn is male. Why can’t he ever remember? Such an idiot!”

Lancelot glanced at Blackie, but did not comment.

“At least he knows my Little Fireball is male.” Cappuccino interrupted, trying to comfort Blood Wolf.

“If he can’t even tell that apart, I’m going to make a jacket out of his skin...”

\* \* \*

The agreed date for the gamble arrived quickly...

Liola wore a Black Knight uniform lined with Silver Dragons, and his weapon was still tucked away in his boots as usual. For the first time, Kaiser actually wore a formal Magician's robe, but his giant gun was still hanging on his hip. Meinan still looked the same; other than the weaved long robe and his mirror with a bowtie, it did not seem like he brought anything else. Flames was lying on the ground next to Daylight's feet, while he was holding his long pike in his hand. Since there was no competition in regards of Mechas, Purity was furious. But without any other choice, she had to take her broken staff with her.

"Such a team!" Qiusi straightened his back, and said with a strange tone, "This makes me... really worried!"

"Prime Minister, you're quite right." Feir's face was pale. He thought, *'This was the team that was going to decide a country's fate?'*

"Hmm! Perhaps they will create a miracle?" Blood Wolf glanced at the "miraculously strange team".

"Hey! Stop trying to kill our confidence!" Kaiser snapped. He was actually trying to straighten his back to pretend to look imposing, but with no one to cheer him, his back deflated, and he returned to his lazy looks.

Everyone talked loudly as they waited. Before long, a Magic door appeared in the air, and everyone knew it was time. The success or failure of this whole plan depended on these "miracle workers".

"Please bring back my brother, Liola, in one piece." Lanski took a step forward and pleaded.

"Don't worry, we will definitely bring 'Liola' back." Daylight promised her, and she nodded.

"Brother, remember to come back early!" Cappuccino ran his fingers through Liola's black hair.

Qiusi also warmly looked at his only son, but everything he wanted to say, he had already said it the night before. Qiusi did not want to say much, but he still could not refrain from reminding him, "Be careful with everything."

Meinan smiled, then nodded.

"Purity, come back safely." Feir worriedly looked at his spoiled baby sister. He never thought this day would happen: the day that his baby sister would have to shoulder



such responsibility. Though he knew not what role she would perform in this endeavor, but he believed no matter what it would be, Purity would try her best.

“Understood, brother.” Purity smiled.

Truth was, everyone had countless number of things to say, but time waited for no one. All they could do was to conjure all their feelings into their eyes, hoping they would understand.

Liola was the first to step into the Magic door with Baolilong in its small Dragon form following next to his feet. Perhaps it because the Aklan Troublemaking Squad was now all here, Liola seemed completely fearless. Kaiser, on the other hand, was murmuring something about whether he'll have lunch to eat today while stepping in. Meinan was busy fixing his looks. After all, he was going to go see the King of a country, so he had to look his best.

Purity, however, was still pouting, clearly still mad about the lack of Mecha competition in the duel. Daylight, finally, was patiently waiting for all his companions to go in before finally stepping in along with his Dragon.

The moment he went in, Liola saw the two Knights who swore their souls to him. These two were acting clearly awkwardly. They had sworn Soul Devotion to him, but they still obeyed the Dragon Emperor. This was not something something Knights should do, but these two people weren't going to abandon the almighty Dragon Emperor. From what they could tell, it was nearly impossible for Liola's side to win this gamble.

The Dragon Emperor had already specially arranged these two people as the receptionists, as a way to damage Liola's morale. Unfortunately, although Liola had made some “progress” in terms of feelings, he was still relatively immune to such an attack, especially since he felt more distant from these two than Yizhou.

Speaking of which, he did not see Yizhou. Liola looked around curiously. Normally speaking, Yiyu and Yizhou were almost always seen together.

“Where's Yizhou?” Liola asked curiously.

Yiyu, who knew the every details, responded quickly by practically popping his eyes out of his sockets and stared at Liola. His tone was vile, “It was all because of you! I don't know what you've given to my brother, and he wasn't willing to betray you no matter what! As a result, the Dragon Emperor, His Highness, had sent him into the dungeon prison.”

Hearing this, Liola was quite surprised. He did not imagine Yizhou would be this loyal to him. He was clearly the only person who was unwilling to swear his soul to Liola... but ironically, he was the only one who did not betray him. On the other hand, the two who easily sworn also easily betrayed him, it was quite an irony.

"Successor, Your Highness, you have to forgive Flower. Flower had no other choice." Flower was still trying to please both sides. Although she obeyed the Dragon Emperor, but she had no intention of offending the Prince who might be succeeding the Dragon Emperor.

"Wow, this place is quite a beauty." Kaiser began talking loudly the moment he came in, "Is this the palace? Whoa, how much is that painting on the wall worth?"

"At least five million." Meinan threw a look from behind his mirror, immediately appraising the value of the painting.

"Damn! Five million?" Kaiser stared blankly at the painting he pointed at randomly.

"Hurry up, Kaiser, everyone left." Purity prodded the Kaiser frozen under the painting, and yelled loudly, "This painting isn't yours no matter how hard you stare at it. Let's go."

Daylight followed behind the two, and his eyes frequently glanced at the various weapons hanging on the wall; some of the weapons looked like they had been through many battles.

After walking through a long corridor, the crowd came to a place with a circular arena in the center. The surrounding seats had already been filled with many people. Of course, they were all Knights. On the largest balcony, there was only one person sitting there: the Dragon Emperor. He glanced down at them, and said, "In accordance with Prime Minister Qiusi and the Commerce Alliance's requests, this gamble will be witnessed by countless Knights, and the entire process will be broadcasted to the rest of the world."

*'I can't believe Qiusi and Feir did so much for us...'* The Aklan Troublemaking Squad was quite moved. Because of this, they would not have to worry about the Dragon Emperor playing any dirty tricks.

The Dragon Emperor glanced at Yiyu, whom yelled unwillingly, "First match, battle of the Knights! It's a 2 versus 2 battle without using your mounts. To win, both your opponents must surrender or die."

Liola and Daylight exchanged a look. Without question, this battle was going to be fought by these two. Without any hesitation, the two jumped onto the arena, waiting for their opponents to appear.

“The successor’s side sends the successor and Sir Daylight.”

The Knights began to cheer. Though they knew not the strength of Daylight, the power of the successor was something they had been acquainted with.

“The Dragon Emperor’s side...” Yiyu’s eyes were fixed at the entrance on the other side. The Dragon Emperor did not tell him who will be participating, so Yiyu had to act accordingly.

Who knew, the face he saw walking in was no stranger...

“Yizhou!” Yiyu yelled loudly.

“Gladiolus!” Kaiser also yelled in disbelief. How could this be possible? Could Gladiolus have betrayed Aklan?

Indeed, the two walking through the entrance on the other side was Gladiolus, who had been missing for a while, and Yizhou, who had been sent into the dungeon prison by the Dragon Emperor.

“Let’s start quickly.” The Dragon Emperor smiled.

Yiyu turned his head and yelled loudly, “Stop joking around! If my brother would be willing to go against the successor for you, he wouldn’t have ended up in jail. What the hell did you do to my brother?”

“What did I do to him?” The Dragon Emperor tilted his head, and asked Yizhou, “Tell him yourself, what did I do to you?”

Yizhou answered courteously, “Nothing, of course. Being able to work for Your Highness is Yizhou’s honor.”

This was not the way Yizhou would reply, Liola immediately determined. Yizhou was being controlled by the Dragon Emperor! Gladiolus had probably fallen to the same fate.

“Liola? What’s wrong with them?” Daylight turned slightly, and asked quietly.

Liola answered simply, “They’re under the Dragon Emperor’s control.”

"How could this be? We must protest. They can't send people who don't want to fight!" Daylight said emotionally.

Liola frowned slightly, "But we have no evidence, and Yizhou and Gladiolus will both be on the Dragon Emperor's side."

"Let's start quickly. I can't wait to fight with the successor."

Gladiolus yelled loudly, and jumped onto the arena with Yizhou. Yizhou even yelled at his brother, "Let the battle start!"

Yiyu widened his eyes, unsure of what he should do.

The Dragon Emperor grew impatient, and yelled, "Begin!"

The moment he finished, Gladiolus and Yizhou began to attack. The two of them each went up against one: Gladiolus went up to Liola, and Yizhou chose Daylight. In that instant, Liola pulled out his Broken Silver, and Daylight already had his pike in his hand. The two immediately began to attack back. The arena was filled with the crisp colliding sounds of weapons.

"Something's wrong."

Kaiser suddenly felt something was strange. He had seen Yizhou's power, and it was no match for Daylight. Gladiolus was probably not a match for Liola. Could the Dragon Emperor be unaware of that? Impossible. Judging from what the Dragon Emperor had done in the past, it was impossible for him to send out these two randomly to fight without knowing their strengths.

He clearly knew the battle prowess of his side was less than his opponents, why would he send them freely? Kaiser thought about it hard. Could it be the Dragon Emperor was giving up the battle of Knights, and put the emphasis on the other two fights?

*'Wait... he remembered something; the condition to win the match was...'*

"Meinan, what was the condition to win this fight?"

Meinan was still looking at the match excitedly, but being interrupted by Kaiser, he answered casually, "Until one side surrenders or... death!" Even Meinan realized something was wrong.

What if Yizhou and Gladiolus would not surrender? It was simple for them not to surrender; if the Dragon Emperor gave them the order, they would die in combat before they would surrender!

“This is the Dragon Emperor’s evil plan!”

Kaiser’s face went pale. At a glance, the match was completely fair, but he knew it well: Liola and Daylight would never kill their opponents. If their opponents would not surrender, they would have to keep fighting... until Gladiolus and Yizhou die from blood loss. Liola and Daylight may even have to surrender just to save their lives!

“What do we do?” Kaiser and Meinan looked at one another awkwardly, but neither could think of a way out.

Liola and Daylight were both dealing with their opponents, and in the short time they were fighting, they weren’t able to seriously injure their opponents. They were focused on the battle and, unlike Kaiser, had not understood the Dragon Emperor’s true motive. The only thing they were trying to do now, was defeat their opponents with their power.

After the battle went on for a while, the difference in strength between the two sides was obvious. Gladiolus sustained more and more wounds to his body, whereas Liola had only a minor scratch on his arm. The difference in strength was far too much.

As for the other side, because Daylight knew his opponent was not fighting out of his own will, he was not willing to harm his opponent. He ended up defending most of the time. Though Yizhou did not sustain many wounds, he could not even touch Daylight. Daylight was like a fortress, and Yizhou was basically shooting at a fortress without a shotgun — completely useless.

Liola used only a moment to decide. His strength was far greater than that of his opponent, but the victory condition was either surrender or death. Killing their opponent was not an option, so they had to make them surrender. However, Gladiolus and Yizhou did not show the slightest sign of wanting to surrender.

*‘What if they wouldn’t surrender?’*

The question suddenly came up in Liola’s mind; then they would have to kill their opponents to secure the victory... but he would never kill Gladiolus and Yizhou!

Therefore... they could not win! Liola finally realized the reality of it. He panickedly looked towards Kaiser, whom returned a helpless smile, indicating he, too, had realized this sinister plan, and he was at a loss as to what they should do.

They were in a terrible predicament. Liola frowned as he fought while trying to think of way out of this. Perhaps it was because he was a bit absent-minded, Liola's body suddenly sustained a few more wounds, but Gladiolus sustained even more wounds.

Gladiolus still did not show any sign of surrendering. When Liola thought what he was about to do was a bit despicable, but it was the only thing he could think of. Hopefully borrowing someone's name wasn't going to them angry.

"Meiji!"

Liola said with a deep voice. Surely enough, Gladiolus reacted: he paused briefly before attacking again.

It was definitely effective. Liola had no choice but to begin nagging. As he fought, he kept on saying things like, "If Meiji saw you like this, she would be devastated", or "If you can't escape the Dragon Emperor's control, Kaiser would never marry his sister to you."

These words were definitely effective at slowing Gladiolus down, but they were far from making him surrender. Liola had no choice but to keep talking about Meiji, hoping that with enough thoughts of Meiji, Gladiolus would automatically surrender.

Daylight was, at first, surprised when Liola started talking while fighting. He thought Liola did not want to continue the fight, and therefore was trying to wake Gladiolus. However, after fighting for a while, he slowly realized why Liola was trying to wake Gladiolus: the number of wounds on Yizhou kept increasing, but he did not show any signs of surrendering.

It was as though he did not know surrendering was an option.

Daylight could not bear to continue fighting either. Seeing the wounds accumulating on Yizhou, he began to nag like Liola: saying things like "Your brother would be upset" and "Your brother Yiyu would be devastated to see you with more wounds..." For some reason, however, Yizhou did not seem to be affected at all.

Daylight felt even more helpless. What exactly would they have to do to end this battle?

Would they really be forced to kill Gladiolus and Yizhou?

“Ah! I slipped!”

Kaiser suddenly yelled loudly, and something flashy flew across the air. With everyone staring at it, it landed on... Liola's head.

After being hit by the unknown object, Liola quickly reached to grab it, and sustained an attack from Gladiolus as a result.

With everyone's murderous gaze at him, Kaiser frowned and yelled loudly, “Aiya, my hand just slipped, that's all. It's not illegal to accidentally throw a necklace, right? And I even helped the enemy hurt my own team, so it can't be a foul, right? Everyone, what do you say?”

The Dragon Emperor's face was furious. He knew Kaiser definitely did not slip; the necklace must have something to do with Gladiolus. But after what Kaiser said, the audience dismissed it as nothing. If the Dragon Emperor were to speak against it now, the Knights might become suspicious. The Dragon Emperor had no choice but suppress the anger in his mind, and continue looking at the show. After all, there was still Yizhou.

Liola leaped backward to pull away from Gladiolus, then used this chance to observe the necklace Kaiser throw. Of course, he would not think Kaiser threw this as a result of an accident. It only took him one glance to realize this was a necklace similar to the one Cappuccino had given him. It was a locket that could hold a picture. Without looking, he was certain this locket had a picture of Meiji.

At this time, Gladiolus approached him again. Liola decided to use this opportunity to get close to Gladiolus. After a few grunts, Liola wrestled Gladiolus to the ground and held him there. He then opened the locket before Gladiolus's eyes.

“Who is this?” Liola asked with a deep voice.

“Mei... Meiji.” Gladiolus said it with difficulty, then he managed to explain, “I, the one Meiji gave me... the one the Dragon Emperor took away.”

Liola heard this, and he knew Gladiolus was now at least partially restored. He said with a refrained voice, “Surrender! Surrender now! Meiji is still waiting for you in Aklan. You must surrender to be able to go back to see her.”

“I...”

Gladiolus sank into a battle in his own mind; the emotions in his heart clashed with the cold part being controlled by the Dragon Emperor. Finally, after seeing the playfully smiling Meiji in the locket, his heart softened, and his feelings for her emerged victorious.

“I surrender.”

Liola immediately put the locket into Gladiolus’s hand. He knew this was the only way to keep Gladiolus awake. Then, he purposely threw Gladiolus out of the arena. Of course, he tossed him directly towards the Aklan Troublemaking Squad. He believed Kaiser would take good care of him. In any case, they can never let the Dragon Emperor control Gladiolus again.

Now, it was time to deal with Yizhou.

Liola really did feel helpless. He knew not what could possibly wake Yizhou. Could it be emotions? But the closest person to him was Yiyu, and he was already here, yet he did not wake up. Could it be... the only way was to kill him?

No! Determination shone through Liola’s eyes. He would never kill a Knight who was loyal to him!

**[End of Volume 12]**